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PRISONER OF WAR

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on Mr. Knopf's List

**

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EDWIN ERICH DWINGER

PRISONER OF WAR

A SIBERIAN DIARY

Translated from the German by Ian F. D. Morrow

NEW YORK ALFRED·A·KNOPF MCMXXX

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FOR

DR. ELSA BRÄNDSTRÖM

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book is composed of entries made in a diary during the years 1915–18. It is not a narrative of either battles or heroic deeds, but of life far behind the front lines. It is a story of what went on in the "back-yards" of the war, and of those who died without their names being mentioned in the casualty lists.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

I desire to express here my gratitude for the valuable assistance received in the preparation of this translation from my friend Herr Hans von Meixner, who himself spent more than five years in Russian captivity under conditions similar to those described here.

THE TRANSLATOR

Vienna, 1930

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1915

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As I raised my sword to give my troopers the signal to attack, I was wounded for the first time. "Forward; lances in position; attack," I wanted to cry out, but I did not get beyond the first word. My troopers scattered like drops of water from a puddle struck by a down-coming heel. My mare, Zelle, reared straight up, hesitated a moment, then fell backwards.

I felt dully that all was at an end. Yet, although the desire to do so was strong within me, I did not call out for my mother. "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" I cried. Our religious teacher, Professor Schwarz, had explained this phrase to us as being a testimony to the humanity of the Son of God. It was no wonder that it came readily to my lips at this moment.

I was seventeen years old.

When I awoke, it seemed to me as though someone was sawing through both my legs. My mouth was full of crumbled earth. In my pain, while falling, I had bitten into the ploughed field. When I looked for my sword, I discovered that in the mean while I had been robbed. Field-glasses, watch, pocket-book, revolver — everything had been taken. "Captive" — the word rang shrilly through my head. It was as though I had once more been hit — this time through the head.

Perhaps I could still save myself. My legs were paralysed, my back was stiff, and I could not alter my position. A heat burnt my thighs as if a fiery coal lay between them. I opened the flap of my trousers and inserted my hand. At the right, on the inner side of the thigh, four fingers slipped into a gaping hole; on the left, and farther down above the knee, only a single finger could be inserted into another wound.

"So you will bleed to death!" This knowledge scarcely grieved me any longer; for I had lost too much blood to be able to feel anything very intensely. "Perhaps this is even

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better than captivity," I thought comfortingly to myself, gazing in surprise up at the blue sky. I turned my gaze upon something fluttering near by. It was only one of our lances on which the black and white pennon flapped in the breeze — as though crying for help.

After a time a troop of Cossacks came riding past. My sergeant was bound to their stirrups; his face was chalky, he limped, and as he panted by some five paces away, he saw that I was alive and pointed to me. Two Cossacks leapt from their horses and approached me. Seeing my bleeding body, one of them waved his hand, as if to say: "It is too late." But they did not prevent Schmidt II from taking down my trousers in order to bandage me. I gazed in suspense upon my left thigh. If the blood were to gush forth, all would be over; but if it only oozes. . . . "It only oozes," said Schmidt II, as if he knew what I was thinking. To my right and left lay a couple of dead troopers from my squadron. Schmidt went from one to the other, turned them over on their backs, and removed their rolls of bandages. Kneeling down with a groan beside me, he rolled — rolled — rolled. "Damn it," he said gloomily, "it always comes through again." Finally he and the Cossacks buttoned up my tunic and, supporting me under my arms, lifted me up. I placed my right arm around Schmidt's shoulder, my left around the neck of a Cossack. My legs dangled like those of a marionette, filled with sawdust and jointless. "*Nu, pascholl,*" cried the Cossacks, as they sprang with a clatter into their saddles.

From the Windau — a small river in Kurland, which we crossed by means of a ford — Schmidt II gave me a drink. I emptied six cups in succession; it seemed as though it were only six drops. As we were looking for the ford, we passed by a dragoon half immersed in the river and transfixed by his own lance. It was Südekum — a volunteer — I recognized him by his spectacles, which were held to his ears by wires. "A stupid

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fellow," said Schmidt II, who had also recognized him. "He saw so badly without his spectacles that he was nearly blind whenever he lost them. He need never have volunteered, never once hit the target, and now he's got it."

On the farther bank of the Windau we encountered another troop of Cossacks. A couple of our horses were in their possession, and a dozen of my dragoons were their prisoners. Leaning against a dead horse was my sergeant major, Schnarrenberg — a pucka soldier decorated with the Iron Cross. His teeth protruded a little; he ground his jaws. "You, too, Cornet?" he grumbled in a disappointed tone.

Podbielski, Blank, Schmidt I, and Brünninghaus greeted me with their eyes. Nobody spoke. All had got their share. Three from the first squadron had been severely wounded by sabre-cuts and thrusts from lances. My men had only bullet wounds. "Well, devil take it!" said Brünninghaus. "The war is at an end for us."

"Coward!" murmured Schnarrenberg, grinding his jaws still more vigorously and looking as if he were chewing something hard.

The Cossacks were good-natured and in a good humour. Their unexpected victory had inspired them with kindly feelings. I understood them, in spite of their Siberian dialect, for my mother was a Russian, although we were never permitted to speak Russian in my father's presence. How fortunate — I think to myself — that, when father was away at sea, I always asked mother to teach me her native language! And how wise it was of her to die before this war broke out! My God! what should I have done? She would never have got over it. . . . He, however. . . . It was a matter of course to my father that I should be among the first to volunteer for service. He is an officer.

After a time two Panje wagons came rumbling up, low vans with racks at the side, filled with straw. With the best intentions

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my troopers laid me first in the wagon. But the Cossacks were in a hurry, and they packed the whole dozen into the two wagons. Five men lay upon my wounded thighs. Their weight pressed me against the side rack, so that my face was jambed up against it as though against prison-bars. Close beside the rack the wheel turned and ground, and barely an inch separated forehead and mouth and chin from it. If the bars had broken, a single turn of the wheel would have torn the entire skin from my bones. I strained violently backwards, and this protracted exertion used up my last ounce of strength.

When the wagons stopped beside the Russian Divisional Staff Headquarters, I was so weak that I could not prevent the tears from rolling down my cheeks. Next to me lay Schnarrenberg. Being the undermost, we were left in the wagon; the others were laid beside it upon the grass. Some uttered smothered groans. Little Blank moaned. Schnarrenberg glanced at me. "Damn it, Cornet!" he muttered angrily on seeing my tears. "Smoke — that helps." Customarily stingy — now he thrust a cigarette between my lips. Why? A gentle numbness overcame me. After three or four puffs my eyes were dry again.

A couple of Cossacks came galloping up. Over their saddles hung bleeding officers, whose bodies flopped like strips of rubber against the horses' flanks. Their faces were terribly disfigured. A youthful Transbaikal officer stepped up to our wagon. He wore shining Wellingtons, blue silk breeches with yellow stripes, and a green silk sash. Schnarrenberg gave me a sharp and commanding punch in the ribs. "I protest against our treatment," I said at once. "We have been robbed of all but our shirts — contrary to the laws of war." Schnarrenberg emitted a satisfied murmur. He did not know a word of Russian, but he understood the tone in my voice. The young officer only smiled. "Is it not enough that life was left you?" he asked gently. "We Cossacks are not always accustomed to be so generous. In your place I would be satisfied."

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Presently a troika drove into the courtyard. Between two Russian officers of high rank I recognized a German dragoon uniform, a sharp familiar face in which a piece of glass glittered. "Captain Count Holcking — first squadron," said Schnarrenberg, as though he were making an official report. The troika came to a standstill ten paces away from our wagon. Holcking alighted painfully, supported on either side by the Cossack officers. What? His sword was still hanging by his side? He took three or four steps, remained standing, fought for breath, shook his head — and looked as though he should long since have been dead. An officer hurried away, only to return immediately with an old General and his staff. "Have a look, Cornet," Schnarrenberg murmured excitedly, and I raised my head a little and heard someone report: "Colonel Beljajeff requests Your Excellency to leave his sword to this officer because of his valour." Holcking did not know Russian — did not understand. What was there left for him to do? He drew his sword from its scabbard with nerveless fingers, held it aloft, shaking with emotion. Solemnly the old General saluted, bowed respectfully, and returned the sword to him with a polite gesture. Holcking stood like a man turned to stone. He seized the sword with his right hand, pressed his left upon his chest, and suddenly fell like a log upon the ground. "Is war not beautiful?" said Schnarrenberg enthusiastically. "Damnation! that was something like! Let people talk as they like — that was something like!"

Towards evening we were carried into an empty room in the Divisional Headquarters. About a hundred severely wounded men lay, one beside the other, on straw around the walls. Most of them groaned, several of them emitted the death-rattle, and a Cornet, who was still almost a child, called out unceasingly: "Hildegard, Hildegard!" "Have you no morphia?" I inquired of a passing surgeon. "Morphia? *Nitschewo*. . . ."

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A broad table stood in the centre of the room, and on this the wounded were laid, one after another. A surgeon with rolled-up sleeves stood beside the table, while a Cossack held aloft a smoking lamp to light him at his work. Shadows moved back and forth across the whitewashed wall, and the surgeon's knife looked large and long, like a Cossack's sword. Almost everyone who was laid upon that table shrieked after a short time.

Above tall trees a pallid moon was shining. Across the windows came flying silhouettes of galloping Cossacks, with high fur caps, standing erect in the stirrups. The beating of hoofs announced their coming from afar off and, for the time being, deafened our cries of pain. From a great distance came the boom of cannon, while somewhere near by a house was in flames.

I was so weak that I could no longer raise my head. As dusk fell, I was seized by fever. All figures — the surgeon, the Cossack, the riders across the window, the other wounded — I saw only as shadow-pictures. Something mysterious and ghostlike enveloped them, and, though I did not as yet know what "Russia" meant, I had a presentiment in these first quiet hours of my captivity that I was about to enter into a new, strange, incomprehensible world.

I was seized by a suffocating fear — and not I alone. It was to be seen upon all the faces around me, to be heard in each groan, yet did not come from our wounds or our miserable and hopeless plight. It came from the odour of the Cossacks, from the air of the room, from the sound of their language, from each of their quiet bear-like movements. Since he was carried into this room, even Schnarrenberg had not spoken a word. "It will grind us to powder — this dark country!" So thought we all. At midnight the door opened to admit a peasant girl. The lamplight fell upon her face — hers was the only figure I did not see as a silhouette. She carried an earthen jar, and a piece of

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white bread was in one of her hands. After a few steps she stopped, contracted her shoulders as if she were freezing, and looked around her as though searching for help. "Go on, Mascha!" said the surgeon. "None of them can harm you any more! They will all eat out of your hand. . . ." She passed down the rows of recumbent soldiers, remained standing at times, only to proceed again hesitatingly. It was easy to see that she had but one piece of bread, one jar of water, and that she wanted to give to him who had the greatest need. A few raised their hands. A few called: "Here." The mutilated Cornet shrieked in a cracked voice: "Hildegard, Hildegard!" For an instant the Cossack held his lamp over his head in order that she might see better. Without having come to any decision, she returned to the door and began her way round again.

When for a second time she came to my feet, she stopped. I raised my head as far as I could, for I was indescribably tortured by thirst. Did my youthful face dispel her last doubt? She pushed my neighbour aside a little, stepped in between us, knelt down, laid her arm around my shoulders, and with her left hand placed her jar to my lips. I drank thirstily — the while my eyes remained fixed upon her. She was a flax-blonde, about eighteen years old, with a round childlike face and a motherly mouth. When the jar of milk was nearly empty, she soaked the bread in the remainder and pushed it piece by piece between my teeth. When the Cossack again held his lamp aloft, and its flickering light fell upon her face, I saw that large tears rolled down her cheeks. Slowly, almost tenderly, she laid me back upon the straw. I clung to her hands as a child clings to its mother. Had my fever gone? Or was it all only fever? "There are kind people everywhere!" I thought. Something good and gentle had touched me and poured new life into my body. In my dying hour I shall see her before me.

Presently an officer came noisily into the room. He brought an order. The surgeon stopped his work at once — little Blank

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was at that moment under his butcher's hands. Six or seven stretcher-bearers carried us away by our hands and legs. The pain of my wounds had for an hour past been unbearable. The bearers laid us down outside upon a meadow. The grass was tall and wet with dew. The sky above us was infinitely calm. "They are taking us away," grumbled Schnarrenberg. "They are afraid, these swine, that tomorrow our comrades will liberate us if they leave us here." I did not believe it. Neither did Brünninghaus, who said: "They only want to make room for the next lot." After an hour had passed by, a train of wagons arrived — thirty or forty — each horse's head tied to the wagon ahead. We were roughly thrown upon the straw in the vans; but this time we were not placed together — a Russian was laid next to each German. "So that we cannot escape," Brünninghaus remarked sarcastically. The wagons were tiny and did not hold more than a couple of men apiece. A Russian officer was laid next to me. He was unconscious. "It will go well with me," I thought.

Slowly the column wound its way out of the village, escorted by a squadron of Cossacks. For a while the road ran across level country; then we entered an immense forest. It seemed to me as though the road was passing between two steep black walls reaching up to heaven. If they had come any nearer to each other, I should have been crushed between them. The road was full of holes. At times I was thrown against my companion; at others he was rolled over upon me. Nevertheless it might have been worse for me. In the wagon ahead the Russian screamed unceasingly — it sounded as though a dying dog were inside him. Every now and then the Cossacks came riding along the train of wagons; they were no longer good-natured and friendly. Perhaps Schnarrenberg was right after all; we had been victorious somewhere. Each time they rode past they made vicious thrusts at the Germans with their long lances. Couldn't they hit, or didn't they want to hit? Twice the sideboards of my

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wagon, close beside my body, were splintered by the points of their lances.

When we reached the middle of the forest, the Russian officer in my wagon grew restless, uttered suppressed groans, and began throwing himself about. I turned my head and looked at him. He was a big bearded powerful man. The right side of his face and his chest were bandaged. "Oh!" he groaned, "Oh!" I moved aside a little to avoid hurting him. From the appearance of the left half of his face he seemed to be weeping. Presently he raised himself up and seized the bandages on his head with his hands. I sought to hold his hands in order to prevent him from tearing off the bandages. A fierce fight ensued. He grasped me by the throat. As I was trying to free myself from his grip, he tore the bandages from his head with a jerk. His cheek was cleft from the temple to the chin. Through his jaws I could see his white teeth grinning at me in the blackness of the night. At the same moment he began to rave. There was something peculiarly gruesome about his shrieks, which seemed to come, not from his mouth, but from the gaping slit in his cheek. He threw his arms about so violently that I was almost pushed out of the wagon, and I was forced to grasp the side with all my might in order to prevent myself from falling out. Gradually he began to pant and his breath came in gasps. I drew a sigh of relief. "He is dying," I thought thankfully. The wagons rolled on unceasingly while in front of us the spavins of our horses rubbed monotonously against each other. The stars glittered hard and cold above our heads.

With the next jolt of the wagon the Russian rolled over on top of me, like a sack of flour, and his cleft cheek fell wet and cold against my lips. I distinctly tasted his blood in my mouth, and I thrust him violently away from me. I felt the hair rising upon my head, and my eyes seemed to be starting from their sockets, but, nevertheless, I turned round deliberately to gaze upon him. "At last he is dead," I thought to myself. "What

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more can I ask? Is it not better than if he were still fighting with me?" It was not better. I could not keep my eyes away from his face — that unbelievably terrible moonlit face — from which the cheek, with a large piece of beard, hung down upon his chest. Yet it was less frightening to look at it than to imagine it beside me in the dark. His body was still warm; the cheek was already cold. Each time a jolt of the wagon caused it to fall across my face, I felt it. "Our Lord in heaven — hallowed be Thy name. . . . Thy trespass come upon us. . . . We forgive Thee . . . as Thou forgivest us. . . ." I began to pray, and to hear voices — metallic voices that rang like great bells. Was I going mad?

I did not go mad. If morning had not come soon . . . ? The voices and the bells vanished with the fresh dawn. The body beside me lost its unnatural appearance. The morning was bright and sunny as the column came to a standstill in the market square of the village of Auts. A dozen peasant women went from wagon to wagon with pitchers and cups. When they reached the wagon in which I lay, they clapped their hands to their faces. "What is the matter?" a Cossack called out, as he came quickly up to the wagon. "Have you killed him, you damned sausage-eater?" "No . . . no." A peasant woman filled a cup with a red juice and held it to my lips. "What — give him a drink, the dog!" exclaimed the Cossack, dashing the cup from her hand. A small crowd gathered. Six or eight Cossacks came running up. "Come along, you fellows!" the first yelled out. "Let us water this little dog." Beside the wagon stood a pump, at which they filled their mouths. Then, standing with swelled cheeks in a circle around me, and bending down grinning over my face, they promptly spat out the water in their mouths all over me. One had a nose that was a mass of ulcers, and the upper lip of another was swollen with syphilis. Ten to twelve times they went to the pump and returned to squirt out the water over me. Soon I was wet from head to foot,

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while the water ran down from the wagon in sputtering rivulets upon the pavement. A few peasant women began to cry. "I wish I could die now!" the thought passed through my mind. "Must I be degraded still more deeply?" Finally some ambulance men came to place the dead Russian upon a stretcher and to bear him away to join a heap of dead from the other wagons. "Forward! Forward!" an officer called out. The Cossacks ran to mount their horses. A peasant woman wiped my face with her apron. A young girl put two cucumbers and a piece of black bread upon my chest. The horses started, and we began to move onwards. The sodden straw was pressed into a thin layer that no longer sufficed to deaden the jolting of the wagon. My tunic was filled with pus and blood. My two wounds seemed to be extending ever more deeply into my body. I was terribly cold.

In the afternoon we reached Mitau, where we were again carried into an empty room with a straw-covered floor. Two ambulance men brought a big cauldron of hot *schtschi.* Each of us was given a tin bowl and a wooden spoon. A stimulating odour of cabbage and meat-broth pervaded the room. We all fell to greedily. Podbielski had emptied his bowl before the ambulance man had even had time to fill it. "This infernal smell of cabbages!" he said plaintively. "This would be enough for a sparrow, but not for me."

While the meal was in progress, stretcher-bearers came in and carried us away, one after another, upon stretchers. They laid me upon an operating-table in a bright room smelling strongly of iodine mingled with a heavy Russian perfume. A young doctor was working away with blood-stained instruments. A pretty nurse at once began to busy herself with my trousers. "Off with them!" she said, with the peculiar intonation of the pure-blooded Russian. A flush spread over my cheeks, and I involuntarily placed both my hands between my thighs. "Darling," she said in Russian, with a little laugh,

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"did you ever see a soldier who is so ashamed?" The young doctor turned smilingly around. "No," he said, and gave me a look. "But this is not one. This is only a boy." He came close to me and asked in German: "Is it already necessary in Germany to put children into the regiments?" "I was a volunteer," I replied stiffly. He frowned as he bent over my bandages. "Why so wet?" he asked abruptly. "Because your Cossacks spat upon me!" I answered loudly. "Our soldiers are devils, Niki," the nurse said indignantly, while she held her hands to my forehead to press me back in case I should struggle. Her precaution was scarcely necessary. My bandages were so sodden that the crusts had softened. "Come on, little soldier," the nurse said, when all was over. "Put on this hospital-coat while I dry your clothes." "Yes, do, Sonjuschka," said the doctor, as he exchanged glances with her. "She must be his sweetheart," I thought excitedly to myself. Encouraged by his looks, she rubbed my body dry, wrapped a red hospital-cloak around me, and placed a cigarette between my lips. "There! Now you are all right, aren't you, little soldier?" she asked in a motherly tone.

As evening came on, we were placed in a hospital train, in which the beds rose in three tiers above each other. There were white sheets, woollen horse-covers, and pillows. Everything was clean and quiet. A sister walked up and down. An orderly brought bottles and chambers. At the last moment the nurse from the bandaging-room arrived with my clothes. "Thank you," I said in fluent Russian. "Please greet your friend from me." She gave a little cry. "You know Russian?" she asked in a frightened voice. "Yes," I replied, "a little." She laughed bashfully and ran off quickly. The train began to move. I looked out in silence. I stretched myself in my white sheets. I would have liked to have someone to love. My uniform lay across my feet, cleaned as well as possible, and dry. Did it not give forth an odour of a heavy Russian perfume?

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Brünninghaus lay next to me, a slender man with a smooth clean-shaven face, neatly upturned moustache, and supple fingers. He gazed contentedly up at the ceiling with his hands beneath his head. "Damnation!" he said joyfully, "I should like to stay here until peace comes. Come here with the chamber, Russky comrade." My sergeant major lay two beds farther away. "Well, Cornet," he said, "now it is possible to endure it. How did you fare during the night?" "Oh!" I replied, "tolerably." "I was not so lucky," he said. "The fellow next to me wanted to take liberties, began to cling to me and to cry out for his mother. I kept on hitting him in the mouth until he saw his mistake and left me alone."

As we entered Riga, night had fallen. For half an hour we were carried through dark streets until we were unloaded in the courtyard of a building with many windows. Hundreds lay about on stretchers. Not a soul took any notice of us. "Organization, organization!" growled Schnarrenberg. It was cool and the dew was falling. I distinctly heard my neighbour's teeth chattering. If I had not had dry clothes now. . . . There came a distinct rumbling as of thunder. The front was far distant. The sound must come from the sea. It must be the guns of a warship. "Tell me, Cornet," inquired Schnarrenberg, "isn't your father a naval officer?" "Yes," I replied. "Don't you know where he is stationed at present?" "In his last letter — truly, in his last letter there was something about a naval attack on Riga." "Good God, then it is they!" He became excited and began to listen for each explosion. "You will see. In three days Riga will have fallen. In three days we shall be free." I made no reply. "Perhaps he is right" — the thought flashed through my mind — "but . . . no!" I did not want to believe it, for it would have been too terrible if. . . . Nevertheless I found myself listening with him for each explosion. For the first time since I had been captured, my thoughts flew to my father. "If he knew!" I thought feverishly.

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At last we were carried up many stairs and brought into a room the entrance to which was guarded by a barred prison-door. Before the tiny door stood two sentries with fixed bayonets. At times one had believed that one was nothing more than a wounded soldier. Here for the first time we realized that we were prisoners. By chance I was given a bed which was still warm; the coverlet was smeared with blood. Schnarrenberg and Schmidt II were placed — still on their stretchers — in the aisle between the beds to the right and left of me. The mutilated Cornet was laid at my feet. Although he was still alive, his cries had sunk to mere gasps. He was so weak that he could not even call "Hildegard" any more. Nor had he sufficient breath left to utter three syllables consecutively. We could only just hear him moaning "Hil — Hil —" and every gasp he gave resembled this sound.

That night Schmidt II died. He was lying next to me, so I could witness all the stages of his dying. He was only slightly wounded — the slightest wound of us all — but he got tetanus; for we were not given any tetanus serum. For three or four hours he lay stiff, only his eyes were alive — eyes that regarded me unblinkingly. "He has only a scratch, has only been grazed, yet has to die" — so the thought passed through my brain. "It was not even necessary to carry him; he saved me — and yet has to die." If he had not chanced to come past that place? A terrible doubt stirred within me. Is everything chance? Is everything God? At last his eyes became fixed upon one spot, dimmed slowly, and became covered with a milky veil. Almost at the same instant the Cornet at my feet stretched himself out. "Give me his pocket-book," I demanded hoarsely, "I will write to her." As it was being handed over to me, a photograph dropped out — a girl, young, dark. On the back was written: "I pray for you every day. God is good."

God is good? No — I wanted to sleep; I did not want to think of it. But it was not sleep that came after a while, it was

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more of a falling down into dark depths, a sort of semi-consciousness due to exhaustion. Suddenly I became aware that all the doors were opening. A voice called out: "Attention!" A broad-shouldered naval officer came rapidly and with a light step into the room. He was followed at a respectful distance by his suite. From bed to bed he went, coming nearer all the time, until he suddenly stretched forth both arms. "Well, my dear boy?" I started up. No one was standing before me. No familiar voice was speaking to me. Around me lay only the dying and the dead. Of my feverish dream nothing was true, except that at times the window panes rattled with the thunder of the distant cannonade. "Might it be possible after all?" I asked myself. "Have I a presentiment?" I fell back in bed again. Once more the door opened — and again — and again. This continued until dawn, until the fever left me. Six or eight times I started up. "Well, my dear boy. . . ."

Morning had scarcely come before a crowd of orderlies noisily burst into our room. "*Idji, pascholl,*" they cried excitedly. Before we had time to learn what was the matter, they had carried us out again through the great barred doorway. No one in whom was the least spark of life was left behind. From the doorway I cast a parting glance backwards into the room. Schmidt II and the Cornet had been rolled from their stretchers to make room for others. Both lay upon their stomachs in front of my bed, with their faces distorted by pain, as if they had been upon the rack. "The whole hospital is being evacuated," whispered an infantryman with a shot in his pelvis. "It is said that only one railway line is open. All the others are already under the fire of our ships." Schnarrenberg's jaws were grinding while his bulldog face, with its prominent cheek-bones, brushed-up moustache, and low furrowed forehead, was green with excitement. "Didn't I say so, Cornet? Didn't I say so? Oh, these swine — at the last moment." I was quite apathetic. I no longer had strength enough left to be sorry or glad. I only

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wanted quiet — quiet at last for weeks, months, years. Certainly I pictured to myself how it might have been but. . . . Undoubtedly he would have brought me to Kiel on board his ship in the beautiful cabin in which my mother's portrait hung.

A broad flat landscape flew past the windows of our hospital train. At times we still heard the rumble of the cannonade. At times the wheels ran with a grating rattle across the catch-points — every jerk and jolt stung as though red-hot needles were being thrust into our wounds — and with each revolution we were borne farther away from our hope. The feeling that at this last moment we had been forced to go away — that we had, so to speak, in this hour been taken captive for a second time — was a torturing thought to us all. Even the buoyant Brünninghaus, who adapts himself to all situations, had fallen silent. Podbielski could have been restored to his high spirits by a good dinner, but in the haste of departure food had been forgotten. And my sergeant? Schnarrenberg cursed without ceasing. His bile rose into his sharp-cut face, and he looked as yellow as saffron.

It was again night when we reached Moscow. Once more we were left to lie for hours on the platform before we were finally carried into specially arranged tram-cars to be driven, rattling and jerking, through the poorly lighted streets. Once more we were borne through high barred gates, at which heavily armed sentries stood, and set down in the broad central corridor of a building resembling barracks. In a side corridor forty to fifty dead bodies had been heaped up, one above the other; and fresh bodies were constantly being brought down from the different floors. Beds had to be obtained — vacant beds. One after another we were lifted up and carried into a musty bath-room. We were thrust — our bandages still on — into luke-warm water with a pungent smell. Three handfuls of a grey-coloured ointment were slapped on to each of us beneath the armpits and on the hair on the lower part of our bodies. An

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enormous bear-like orderly wrapped me undried in hospital linen and bore me off in his arms into a large ward in which a petroleum lamp burned dimly. I heard Brünninghaus say: "That, gentlemen, is known as a water-cure." My bed was again half warm and covered with stinking pus. My saturated linen clung to my body, both my bandages were dripping, and my straw mattress was wet through. On my bed was no coverlet, only a dirty sheet. My teeth chattered, my wounds burned, and the clumps of pus on my pillow so disgusted me that my stomach turned in revolt. Yet I could not raise my head, nor even hold it over the side of the bed, and I simply vomited in front of me upon my chest and throat. As my stomach was empty of food, only phlegm and bile were thrown up. Nevertheless it sufficed to conceal the stink of the pus; it was not foreign to me; it was my own — and that was something.

As day dawned, I perceived that Schnarrenberg lay on my left; on my right lay a stranger with a full beard. He must have been shot through the lungs, for he coughed frequently, and flecks of light-red foam appeared on his lips. Brünninghaus and Podbielski lay on the other side of the passage between the beds. They looked better than any of the rest of us. Of the others — Schmidt I, little Blank, and Bahr — there was no trace. "Good morning, gentlemen," Brünninghaus called across. "Damnation! That was a shearing. It is to be hoped that now we shall enjoy a well-earned rest, eh?" And he added, as he turned his head to all sides: "A fine place, I must say."

"If there were not such a smell of cabbage!" snarled Podbielski, who was an awkward giant with the eyes of a dog, a labourer's hands the size of plates, and a beard that hung over his chest like a brown bearskin. He was already known to all as "Pod."

I looked from one to the other. I was so weak and broken-down that I could scarcely speak. My only desire was to tell them with my eyes how glad I was that they at least were near

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me. "How are you, *Junker?*" Brünninghaus asked at once. With an effort I smiled, and replied gratfully: "All right, Brünninghaus, all right." "If I could but crawl," said Pod, "I would take care of our little one." "Here, orderly," he called in his deep voice. An orderly came. (Orderlies are of various natures — some are kind and obliging, others brutal and rude.) Pod threw off his coverlet, pointed towards me, and said: "I feel hot. Take it to him, comrade." "No, Pod, what for?" I exclaimed in a low voice. "Shut up, *Junker.*"

At eight o'clock came the nurses — gentle creatures with well-kept hands — figures out of fairyland. Entrancing little shoes with high heels, and silk stockings of all shades, showed from beneath their snow-white dresses. A tall, dark-haired nurse took charge of my row of beds. As she passed my bed, she came to a standstill. "How old?" she asked. "Seventeen," I answered softly, so that no one should hear. When she bent over my head in order to inscribe my board with a white cross, I experienced a wonderful sensation of pleasure as I caught the smell of hair-water and fresh soap.

Before noon orderlies arrived with stretchers to carry us two by two into the bandaging-room. After a short time a heart-rending chorus of shrieks was to be heard. Up till then I had believed that all persons in pain emitted the same sounds; now I know that every nationality screams in a different way; and on that very first morning I could distinguish the German from the Austrian, the Hungarian from the Turk. Moreover, I very soon learnt that the coarse-grained bear-like men roar the loudest, and that the delicate and weak are possessed of great powers of resistance. Together with Schnarrenberg I was borne into the bandaging-room. "We will not scream, Cornet, will we?" he muttered at the last moment. "We will just show these nurses . . . !" When I was laid upon the table, all the nurses gathered round me. "Look, doctor, a boy!" said a dainty blonde. The doctor gazed at me in surprise. He had

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large grey eyes. His left eye regarded me as fixedly as if it were made of glass. "How old?" he asked. "Eighteen," I replied defiantly, turning my head towards Schnarrenberg, partly through anger, partly to derive encouragement from him, but also because my shirt had been rolled up under my armpits and my trousers drawn down below my knees. If I had had the use of my hands, I would have defended myself; but my arms were bound down with broad straps. Schnarrenberg had practically the same injury — a fracture of the upper thigh-bone. When his bandage was torn down, his face altered beyond recognition — and yet he did not scream. Then my bandage was torn down, something cold touched my skin, and I heard the clash of a couple of instruments. "Be careful, please," said the dainty nurse. I gazed fixedly at Schnarrenberg. Oh, no, I would not be less brave! If it were possible for him. . . . A pair of cool feminine hands were laid upon my forehead, and pressed my head firmly against the table. I smelt the odour of iodine, and a red-hot flame burned through my thigh. I gurgled noisily. Schnarrenberg's sardonic face sank rapidly, ever more rapidly, into a black fathomless abyss.

While we were being bandaged, our beds were covered with clean sheets, urine-bottles were laid in them, and when I awoke from my faint, all was quiet around me. The June sun shone brightly in through the windows. The dark nurse was walking swiftly to and fro. "Well, *Junker*," Brünninghaus called across to me, "did they send high electric currents through your nerves? Did they turn off the switch?" An electrician by calling, he was fond of using technical terms. I smiled in some embarrassment. "You must scream, *Junker*," he went on in a disapproving tone, "screaming is good — all the rest is nonsense. To what end? No! One must scream, one feels half as much. . . . What need for us to play the hero here? It is heroism enough that we have not hanged ourselves long ago." "Cowardly pack!" snarled Schnarrenberg. But nobody heard

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him. I turned over on my side and saw four pieces of sugar lying upon my night-table. Each afternoon we got a cup of tea with sugar — but how was it that on the other night-tables only two pieces of sugar were lying? I called the nurse, pointed to my sugar, and asked: "Why have I four?" I spoke in German. There was no need for them to know that I spoke their language. Much was to be learnt if they did not suspect it. She pointed smilingly at Pod. "No, Pod, that won't do," I called over. Pod only grinned. "Don't make a fuss," he said kindly.

After tea I slept for a time. When I awoke, I saw Brünninghaus and Pod sitting on the backs of their beds and peering out of the window on to the street. I learnt afterwards that their window looked out upon the Moskva, and that each afternoon naked men and women bathed there. "Look," said Brünninghaus, "she is fine, isn't she? Round before and behind — like my old woman." "You only want to make our mouths water," a voice called out from a neighbouring bed. Suddenly Pod turned round and saw that I was watching them. "Fine doings, *Junker!*" he said. "But just wait a few days longer; then I will carry you over here. An hour of moving pictures every afternoon will do you good."

I was scarcely able to eat anything, although I made the greatest efforts to swallow the food, for I knew that otherwise I could not get on my feet again. But my efforts were of little use. For one thing, I was too weak to hold a spoon; for another, I found food to be terribly repugnant to me, in a manner I was powerless to get over. My only comfort was that I could give it to Pod, who was always hungry, as a small acknowledgment of his kindness. "Are you mad?" he cried out, as I passed it over to him for the first time. "Why?" I asked innocently. "You should eat it yourself. How the devil do you think that your spindleshanks will heal of themselves?" "Hold your tongue!" I called back. Schnarrenberg

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spoke only with me. He showed plainly that he felt himself at odds with his fate, and worried me about thirty times a day with the remark: "If we could only know how matters are at the front!" Undoubtedly we should have liked to know; in that sense he was right. But we learnt absolutely nothing. An orderly — a damn fool in any case — once said: "Berlin in ruins!" Naturally we did not believe him.

Day succeeded day. Pod could already hobble about a little, but he only did so when nobody was looking; for the moment a man could crawl, came the order: "To Siberia!" and we had agreed among ourselves to remain together as long as possible. The man on my right, who was shot through the lungs, grew paler and paler. Yet each day he spoke of getting well in a short time. Once he told me that he was a traveller for a first-class firm in Possneck, in Thuringia, and that he had a wife and two children — a daughter, Anna, aged nine, a boy of eight, named Francis. Both were doing very well at school.

If it had not been for the daily bandaging, life would have been endurable in this hospital, which was said to be one of the best in Moscow; the so-called "sight-seeing hospital," as we were told. Each morning, with the appearance of the orderlies and the stretchers, conversation suddenly ceased. It ceased even before the piercing shrieks began that rendered every word inaudible — shrieks that continued until noon came. For some days past, the wound in my right thigh had been suppurating. Although swathed many times round my thigh, the bandage was always a greenish-yellow colour and smeared with pus each morning. My temperature-chart resembled forked lightning; and each morning the line began to shoot upwards anew. I awoke with a clear head, to think: "God be praised! now I have done with it!" But afternoon had scarcely come before my head became filled with a curious heaviness; and in an hour's time the heads and beds of my neighbours

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were swaying around me in a rocking mass. Once more I returned to the front to shoot and stab around me — to be pierced by lances and slashed by swords. Each night I was taken captive anew, died afresh, lay beside the dying officer again, and was spat upon once more from the syphilitic mouths. When, aroused by the dreadful realism of my dreams, I started up and thought: "Night is over," the striking of a clock told me that barely thirty minutes had elapsed. I must have experienced all this with terrible reality and sensitiveness, for in the morning Pod's quiet eyes told me that I had tossed about violently. "Perhaps," I thought, "my fever-chart will show yet another zigzag. Nearly every day the curve mounts up to forty or forty-one, and if it keeps on long enough, my heart will cease to work for all time." Nevertheless I had clear moments at night every now and then. It was certainly no fancy due to fever when I felt recently that a woman sat upon my bed, kissed me tenderly upon my burning forehead — her lips were as cool as if touched by ice — and said softly: "*Spatsch, spatsch,* sleep, sleep!" That was certainly no fancy, for Brünninghaus told me that, when the nurse was on night-duty, she always came and sat upon my bed, and that she had kissed me as I had felt. Was it the dainty blonde from the bandaging-room? Is it to be wondered at that I adored her? And not I alone, but all of us, loved these nurses because they were so sweet and clean, although we were unable to talk much with them, as they did not understand anything we said. Always when they took hold of us, raised us up, or put on fresh sheets, and sought to be really kind, they hurt us. Nevertheless we often called them and put up with a little pain in order amidst that dirt and misery to feel the touch of delicate clean hands and to drink in the smell of perfume and hair-lotion. Yes! we were all filled with a secret love for them all. An ideal, or Platonic, love, which, while it blossomed into fantastic fruit in days of separation, yet sank to

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a painful longing for separation in the days when we were together.

On the morning that ushered in our third week in the hospital, Schnarrenberg was cursing with a quite peculiar bitterness. What was the matter with him? Was his strength giving out? Once more we were laid upon the slaughter benches and strapped down like sacrificial lambs. As usual I turned my eyes towards his coarse face to gain courage from his strength. This morning, however, he avoided my gaze and stared up at the ceiling with wide-opened eyes. A nurse was handling red perforated little tubes, which neither he nor I had seen until that morning. The doctor seized one, gave it a brief examination, and thrust it rapidly into Schnarrenberg's wound. Instantly Schnarrenberg's limbs became so tense that the leather straps that bound them threatened to break; he drew breath twice like bellows and let out a piercing shriek. Something broke within me. "Keep cool, keep cool," said the dainty nurse. No, no! I saw another red tube in her hands, a similar tube. . . . The moment the doctor touched me, I roared like a wild beast.

From that morning onwards, Schnarrenberg never spoke a word to any of us. For four days I saw nothing but his broad back and bull-like neck. If he had not been so naturally ruddy, one might have thought that he was blushing with shame. There was certainly no other reason to account for his stubborn silence; he must have been ashamed. Sometimes nothing could be done with him, poor fellow! If something had not occurred to rouse him suddenly from his sullenness and self-dissatisfaction, he would probably have remained silent for weeks on end. We all suddenly and simultaneously observed that the behaviour of the nurses had strangely altered. Although they continued to do their work as heretofore, they were perceptibly cold and short with us. While we were still pondering over this, the rough and careless conduct of the

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orderlies made this change still more evident. Something must certainly have happened at the front. They must have recently sustained a heavy reverse. This dim presentiment was confirmed one afternoon when little Blank, who could now walk on crutches, again turned up amongst us. He was a frail little man, a clerk in civil life, with the eyes of a girl, narrow drooping shoulders, and a contracted, sunken-in chest. "I am in the next ward," he said, "but I could not come before." He drew a ragged bit of paper from his pocket and slyly pushed it beneath my sheet. "It is a bit of a Russian newspaper — I found it in the lavatory. Perhaps there is something in it about the front." I almost trembled as I raised the ragged paper to my eyes beneath the twofold shelter of his and Pod's backs. "We have the devil's own luck," I said; "it is a bit of a report from the front. I can just manage to read: 'The fortified area of Brest Litovsk had to be evacuated for strategic reasons. We have taken up new positions. . . .'" "Ah! You swine!" said Brünninghaus. "Now we know why. . . ." "For strategic reasons," laughed Pod. Little Blank at once hobbled off to tell the news to his ward. "I'll be back immediately," he said cheerfully. With a jerk Schnarrenberg turned over. "God!" he said to himself. "Now we are getting on again! Now we shall have peace in a month!" The news passed from one to another, and a bright spark of hope leapt from bed to bed. All of a sudden the ward was filled with a humming as if a swarm of bees had flown into it. "I shall just be well by the time we can go home," said the man with the shot lungs, and smiled to himself.

Of the nurses, only the dainty blonde in the bandaging-room continued to be the same as before; all the others covered their bodies with a prickly skin. Some of the male nurses poked fun at our wounds and spat upon us on the least provocation. But the doctor with the glass eye remained unchanged, and we all loved him for it. The orderlies' conduct grew worse

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each day. Not a single one of us was now placed upon a stretcher without being forced to cry out in pain. "There is Brest Litovsk for you, you Huns!" I heard one say. As they came for me one morning, Pod sat down upon my bed. When they nearly let me fall from the stretcher, he was upon them in one bound. "You have not tasted blood for a long time, you damned carriers of chamber-pots!" he roared aloud, raising his sledge-hammer of an arm. One stretcher-bearer grew pale; the other was about to turn nasty, but a glance at Pod's wild eyes and herculean body completely silenced him.

One Saturday a great house-cleaning was carried out. We were just thinking that a general was about to inspect the hospital, when a number of ladies came rustling in. The matron — a sour old bird — a couple of old maids who looked like governesses, and two young girls.

"Now I must show Your Imperial Highnesses our youngest Hun!" I heard the old bird say. The blood went to my head. They all stepped up to my bed and looked at me with big eyes. "Like a caged monkey," thought I angrily. I clenched my teeth and put on a haughty look, but I saw all the same that both girls were fairy-like creatures, pretty as pictures, with fine narrow noses, large, shining feminine eyes, delicately curved lips.

"That was something ultra fine, if old Brünn is not mistaken," murmured Brünninghaus, following their scent like a pointer as they passed out. I found out later from the orderly that they were two daughters of the Czar, the Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana.

In the afternoon the music from a military band, with resounding brass and clash of kettle-drums, came up from the Moskva. Pod looked round; nobody was in the room; all had run out into the corridor to look at the parade. He groped his way to my bed and turned back my coverlet. "Sit upon my arm, *Junker*, there is something to look at!" I sat

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up on his left arm — a child at the breast of a bear. Carrying me cautiously to his bed, he let me down at the window, shoved a pillow behind my back, and sat down next to me, his strong arm round my shoulder.

Opposite the window was a small church, a typical Russian church, with fifteen onion-shaped cupolas, all of them painted sky-blue and studded with gold stars. A newly formed regiment passed down the street, a number of standards at its head, new, rich, beautiful flags. Long-bearded popes walked to the right and left and disappeared with the flags into the church. Singing began, rang out heavily, and was followed by a long and solemn silence. "Now they are consecrating the flags," I said softly, somewhat moved.

"Indeed?" said Brünn mockingly. After a while little Blank — the girl — came in and with bright eyes sat down at my other side. Again the blast of trumpets, the dull beating of the kettle-drums. Accompanied by the venerable popes, the flags came back out of the church door. All jubilantly waved their caps, many reverently crossed themselves. The regiment fell into line and to loud music marched down the street to the railway station — to the front.

"If there were no military music, there would only be half as many wars," said Brünn suddenly.

"Yes, Brünn. . . ." said Blank, lost in thought, "and these popes," he continued, "they are representatives of God, aren't they? Like our pastors? But how is that now? All are subjects of One, subjects of God, aren't they? But each one speaks against the other. . . . 'Give victory to our flags!' says the pope. 'No, give it to ours,' says the pastor. . . ."

"It's a difficult matter," said Brünn. "Perhaps in the evening, when work is over, the Lord plays heads and tails with St. Peter about it?"

"Don't talk rot!" cried Blank angrily, immediately looking helplessly round. "No, listen, Ensign, all the priests of

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the world are appointed to glorify Him, are they not? But that means to serve love, charity, compassion, to avoid pain and violence? How is it possible, therefore, that—" He broke off, he could not go on. "Oh, bother," he said suddenly, and went out.

The wound in my thigh suppurated more strongly every day, and my fever did not abate. I was so weak that my comrades had to feed me—I could not carry a full spoon to my lips. Every morning I swam in a puddle of greenish-brown pus; a smell rose from my bed-quilt worse than that from decomposition. Perhaps some poison had come into my wound? Perhaps it had been caused by the wetting at that time? At all events my blood was carrying on a violent combat against a foreign, fatal power, at every moment hurling millions of leucocytes against those destructive powers which from day to day enlarged my wound and which had already transformed it into a white, dead mass twice as large as the palm of the hand.

Since the morning of my arrival in this hospital I had not seriously thought of death. Now I felt darkly and oppressively that I should not be able to endure this daily weakening much longer; that some day my body, unable to withstand the progress of the pestilence, or to overcome the nightly fever, must abandon the struggle.

"Must it be?" I asked myself a hundred times. "Then was all suffering in vain . . . ?"

One afternoon, just as Pod was feeding me with tea by the spoonful, two strange orderlies came into our ward with a stretcher. They had paper slips in their hands and walked searchingly between the rows of beds. I gave such a start that the contents of my full spoon fell down on my bed. "What's the matter, *Junker?*" asked Pod.

"Perhaps they want me," I whispered.

I had felt it; they did want me. "*Nu, paschol!*" said the

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first one, taking down my fever tablet and laying it at the head of the stretcher.

"Where to?" I asked dumbfounded. "Where to?"

"To the first floor," said the orderly, pointing to the ceiling.

"Why?" Pod inquired quickly.

"That is the ward for the amputated," said the man with the shot lung importantly.

"No," I cried out, "I will not, I will not!"

Pod stroked my hair. "Be calm, *Junker*, be calm. . . ."

"No, I had rather die — and die here with you — !"

"*Nu, pascholl!*" repeated the first orderly. The other intimated that he would fetch the surgeon.

"Come on, go with them," said Pod. "It's of no use. Be sensible! Besides, they dare not amputate without your consent."

"My friend Mayer," the man with the shot through his lung interposed, "was amputated against his will. They simply narcotized him while he slept!"

"Hold your tongue, stupid hound!" cried Pod wildly.

I was trembling all over. Should I submit, or should I rebel? My heart would soon refuse to work. In my condition it would not take long.

"Come, be calm!" Pod repeated, taking my spidery hands between his great paws and stroking them sheepishly. "You will only be under observation at first — for eight days at least! And then, if you do not want . . . you can be on the watch now you know what to do!"

I fell back. "Yes, Pod," I said. "Yes, Pod. . . ."

As they put me on the stretcher, I accidentally encountered Schnarrenberg's eyes. They were large and round and seemed as if a new light were in them. All looked after me anxiously, and with difficulty Pod accompanied me to the door.

"I shall come up every day," he said eagerly. "In three days I shall be up to climbing stairs; I shall begin to practise

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today!" His huge figure remained standing within the frame of the broken-down door, and there was a look on his broad, round face which I had never seen there before.

The ward on the first floor afforded a sight at which cold iron seemed to press against my chest. The man with the shot through his lungs was right; none of its inmates possessed all his limbs. It was to be seen by the faces of those who lay in the beds that they had gone through something terrible. Those who hobbled about between the beds on crutches or sticks had lost arm or leg or both. In the aisle, on a small chest with wheels, sat a man from whom even both legs up to the thigh, and one arm up to the elbow, had been amputated. He was the first to greet me.

I was put in a bed standing by itself at a window from which I had the same view as from Pod's bed — the gay church with the onion-shaped cupolas, the shore of the Moskva, where hundreds of people were bathing. Opposite me was lying a Bosnian, a dark man with the build of a gladiator, whose brown, Oriental skin had a colour as if white blood were flowing beneath it. Next to him was an old man with the beard of a forester, who reminded me of a Tyrolean wood-chopper.

A hundred eyes looked at me curiously, questioningly. Alas, I knew myself what an event it was for a ward when a "new-comer" is brought in, but it was painful to be such a new-comer. After a while the first one ventured to come near me. He was one of the luckier ones; he had lost only one leg.

"Well, comrade," he said in a friendly voice. "It is better here than downstairs, eh? To be sure, something will be taken from you, but . . . what will it be?" he added inquisitively.

"A leg," I said resistlessly.

"Then we are in the same boat," he said comfortingly. He sang a little while he talked. He must have been a Viennese. "No, we are better off than all the others," he continued.

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"We shall soon get home, shall be exchanged. Off with the leg — don't care a snap! The chief thing is to get home!"

Before the evening meal the dainty nurse came, sat down on the edge of my bed, and took my hand as if to feel my pulse. "Well, how goes it?" she asked in a warm tone.

I took her by surprise. "Nurse, why have I come here? Am I as bad as all that? Must I really —"

"No, no," she laughed. "They only want to have you under observation . . . that does not mean anything. . . . Many have been taken downstairs again after a week."

But I did not believe it. Her laugh did not sound genuine. And how was I to believe it if nobody confirmed her? For the first time since my captivity I felt indescribably alone. If at least one of my comrades lay near me. . . . But these were all strangers, Turks and Bosnians, Austrians and Hungarians . . . not a single German.

I turned round and looked out of the window. The evening sun was glittering on the Moskva, and its rays caused the stars on the church to sparkle. What was Pod doing now, I wondered — and Schnarrenberg and Brünn? After all, had they not been strangers to me up to the moment at which the bullets struck us down next to one another? Yes, they tore the badges and buttons from our collars — at one blow wiped out all boundaries between us, filled up every gulf! — made us perfectly equal, perfectly equal! . . .

If only they could visit me, I thought. But that might not be for days. . . . Assuredly Pod would come as soon as he could creep up a single stair, and as assuredly little Blank would come; as soon as he found out that I had gone, was lying here alone, and was to be amputated. . . . He was ahead of them all. He could already manage to walk on crutches.

I started up. Music came to my ears from a weak little jew's-harp. It was the old man with the forester's beard and the Defregger face. He blew with full cheeks, and it was easy to

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see that he beat the time with legs that had been amputated at both knees. The two stumps moved in lively rhythm against his thin coverlet, and his pale cheeks violently puffed out the Tyrolean wood-cutter song.

The next morning the dainty nurse, strange to say, was in the bandaging-room on the first floor. As they carried me in, she spoke a few rapid words to the new doctor; but I was so excited that I did not understand what she was saying.

The new doctor was a little, oldish man with bushy eyebrows and gold spectacles. He stood bending over my right leg for a long time, and I noticed that his glance was fixed on me with a compassionate expression.

"No, there is no help for it," he said to the dainty nurse. "The mortified part is already too extensive and is progressing all the time, so that we can, at most, observe for another four days, no longer. . . ."

"There is nothing definite to be said," the dainty nurse translated. "We shall observe for a time. . . . Nevertheless, it would be as well for you to decide whether you would agree to an amputation. As already said, it does not appear necessary for the present — perhaps not at all — but. . . ." I bit my lips until the blood came. I knew they lied. There was a bitter taste in my mouth.

When I got back into my bed, both worked-up and faint, an enema was being administered to the Bosnian opposite. It was a strange liquid that was being let into him, looking like colourless oil and with an overpowering odour. The gladiator-like Oriental lay with his eyes wide open — but the more that the graduated glass tube emptied, the more fatigued he got, until his eyes closed almost imperceptibly. The surgeon rose, the orderlies brought in a stretcher. "Go ahead, quickly," I heard him say, "into the operating-room. . . ."

There was a torturing unrest within me. I felt that something had been done that really ought not to have been done, but

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before I could come to a clear understanding of it, the Viennese came to my bed. "He did not wish to be amputated," he reported. "Devil knows if they will not make use of his powerlessness. . . ."

"So he did not want to be amputated?" I asked hoarsely.

"No, he would rather be dead. What is he to do without a leg in a wilderness where everyone rides? He has already knocked down a few who tried from behind to get a mask over his face. . . ."

I thought hard. Perhaps this strange enema was a new kind of narcotic for those who rebelled. Well, he would soon be back; then I should know; and I should not allow anyone to give me an enema if I did not. . . . Yes, if I did not . . . ! I continued to think. But should I not, after all? I raised my coverlet; it was not better. I was swimming again in a soft, greenish mass. The puss was eating me up; it smelt like decomposing matter. A morbidly increasing need for cleanliness awoke in me to help me. Everything would then be clean and dry again, I said to myself, intoxicated with these words. . . . There would be no smell, no murderous fever, no more vomiting with disgust at my own body. . . . And I should get home immediately! But . . . horses rose up before my eyes. They would no longer exist for me; never more could I get into a saddle, never more feel warm life between my thighs. Nothing would be of value to me any more. I was still so young that I had nothing else!

Fields and forests rose before my eyes. I loved to ramble, I loved nature, but I should no longer be able to stoop to a flower, to a lizard. With crutches or from a wheel-chair the world could not be fully appreciated! Before my eyes there also rose sports grounds, gymnastic apparatus, tennis-courts —no, all these would no longer exist for me. . . .

But I suddenly thought, if I didn't do it, what then? Then all would be at an end, and I should rot in a foreign country!

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Then not even what now seemed so vapid, so little to me would remain. No, it was not little, it was not vapid, it was still enough, more than enough. Should I not keep my eyes, should I not keep my ears? Perhaps all in life that now seemed to me most important was really of little importance. I was still so very young — what did I know?

Only a short while ago I had believed that logarithms and cubic roots were the most important things in life. Our professor had told us so — must we not believe it? Then I saw that they were unnecessary, useless. I learnt that shooting and stabbing were far more important and necessary to life . . . so perhaps a day would come when I should smile at this as I had done at the other.

I was young, I knew nothing of life. I only felt that it must have other things in it than I had hitherto known; that logarithms and the integral calculus, shooting and killing could not be all. No, far greater and more glorious things were waiting for me without doubt — why else did men so love life? Did I not daily see that everyone clung to it with incomprehensible tenacity, that few gave it up voluntarily, that almost all only renounced it after a terrible fight?

No, I had not yet felt what was truly beautiful in it. I had not yet comprehended its mysteries. I had not yet grasped its meaning. I had not yet tasted its sweetest gifts. I . . . I had not possessed any woman.

After two hours the Bosnian was brought back. He lay white as chalk on the stretcher, and all waited in suspense for what he would do. Until evening he slept unnaturally heavily; then, gradually becoming restless, he opened his eyes, shivered, and vomited.

For a while he lay breathing heavily; then his eagle-like nose distended and a paralysing terror overspread his face. I distinctly saw him stealthily, like a thief, slip his hand beneath the coverlet as if to seize something — slowly, slowly.

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The next moment he uttered a strange, gurgling sound and tugged like a madman at an invisible resistance. "Nurse, nurse," I cried.

When at last a sister came rushing up, the death-rattle was already in his throat. The coverlet was pulled back, bandages were brought in in hot haste. . . . He lay in a glistening puddle, amputated at the upper thigh and with open wound, and was rapidly sinking. The bandage was grasped so convulsively in his hands that the blood-saturated gauze could no longer be loosened from his fingers.

That was still left for me to do, I thought, if. . . . No one could hinder me from doing it. . . .

Pod came the very next afternoon. He had actually crept up the stairs on all fours like a dog and was cursing because he had not succeeded in doing it in any other way. "Why must one drag a two-hundredweight body through the world?" he said grimly, "if it does not even give one the strength to go visiting like a decent Christian?"

Then he looked at me narrowly, passing his hand unostentatiously over the coverlet along my right leg. "Everything still present, eh?" he asked, with a sigh of relief.

"Yes, Pod," I said, "but not for long. . . ."

"Really?"

"They don't say it to me, but I overheard the doctor. . . ."

"Well, and will you do it?"

"I don't think so, Pod. What do you say?"

"I think so. In fact, we all think so, even Schnarrenberg. What, after all, depends —"

"You all think, therefore, that otherwise I should go to the beyond, plainly spoken?"

Pod squirmed. "Hm," he said gloomily, "I don't know about that. In fact, nobody can know about that. But if it does not get better, it will blow you over some day, that's what I think.

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Already you look confoundedly chalky. Has nobody here a looking-glass? "

"Is that so . . . ?" I said softly.

"I'll bring you one next time!" His kind face had a tortured look. "Briefly," he continued, "I think that you should say 'Yes.' The amputated are sent home immediately, I have heard; that is worth something too. What should you stay here for? Who knows what we have to expect? Moreover, you need never go into war again. That is still better — damn it all. . . ."

"Yes, Pod," said I, "that's so, but — "

"There are wonderful artificial legs nowadays," he interposed. "A regular industry, let me tell you!" He expatiated on it in detail, his zeal passing all bounds. "I once read an article by a military surgeon about it. In conclusion he said that the artificial legs were as good as the natural ones. . . ."

In spite of everything, I had to laugh. "Yes, Pod, that is all quite true — but the operation might fail. . . ."

"Fail?" asked Pod in astonishment. It was plainly to be seen that he had not thought of that.

"I am already very weak; perhaps I cannot stand it, and then. . . . There are many here from whom at first only a foot had to be taken off, but it did no good. The wound continued to suppurate. . . . Then they went on to the knee and, when that failed, even to the upper thigh. The Tyrolean over there at first had only his toes frozen in the Carpathians. And now? Supposing the same happened to me? They can try once only in my case . . . they cannot go on any farther. . . ."

"Confounded kettle of fish!" Pod muttered. He was at an end, he did not know how to go on.

After a while he got up to leave. "I must be gone now or there will be the devil to pay with my orderlies, but it just occurs to me . . ." he continued in a relieved voice, "you

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might venture to have it done much sooner than any others of us!"

"How so, Pod?"

"Because they will take particular pains with you! I am thinking of the dainty nurse, you know. . . ."

"Oh, Pod. . . ."

"Just as I say! Now sleep well. . . . If possible, I'll come again tomorrow." He groped his way out cautiously by the beds, looked back once again from the door, and closed it with ostentatious care. A hot lump rose in my throat. "He is getting down on his knees now," I said helplessly to myself.

The meal came and passed as usual, and the Tyrolean began in the old way with his wood-cutter song. In the bed of the Bosnian a man had been put both of whose testicles had been shattered by a shot. His face wore an expression that seemed to indicate that he had lost all comprehension.

My thoughts began to concentrate around a small nucleus. I was too weak to be tormented by a pronounced thirst for women; I had too little surplus in me to feel a desire for what was physical of them — no, it was not that — but my soul was still strong enough to give birth to a longing for their spirituality, a longing after the solely feminine, the negative pole as opposed to my young manhood. It was indefinable, this longing, it could not be expressed in words, it was simply present, nothing more.

"No," I said to myself, "I do not want to die; for I have not yet lived! That bright, rosy bit of life of which we read in books and poems, I have not yet learnt to know. It must be indescribably beautiful, this bit, but it must be most beautiful of all to yield for a first time to its mystery, to forget therein all, all of what has fallen on me during the last weeks and nearly caused me to confuse life with war. . . ."

Could it appear otherwise to me? After those months full of

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blood and dirt and murder must it not seem like fairyland — like another and brighter side of existence? Hitherto I had only seen the shadows.

No, I went on thinking, what was a horse, what was a field, what was a tennis-court, after all? What were they compared with this? At all events the fairest still remained for me . . . and in a half-dream I saw before me a maiden who let me forget all this. Her hands knew nothing of blood, her eyes nothing of corpses, her lips nothing of feverish outcries. In her the light of life was embodied for me, the true, glorious light. . . . And I did not even stop at the thought which thrust itself on me in the continuation of these fancies, that in her I saw and recognized the divinity embodied in human shape, the representative of God in this world, in contrast to the earthliness in which I was now living, smothered in dirt and pus.

Night came, but I did not sleep; a burning longing had seized on me — the longing for life and for what in the first place signified chaste juvenility. I felt uncertainly that this train of thought had made me come to a decision, had perhaps saved me from death.

"Well?" I suddenly heard somebody ask.

I started up. "You," I said happily.

"Yes. . . . I only wanted to inquire whether you have made up your mind."

I looked at her with burning eyes. Her white coat fitted tightly across her breast; her knees rounded themselves in oval curves through her skirt. Her hands looked as if they had paradise to give away. All that I had brooded over, all that my young life and longing had cried out for, suddenly stood tangible before me, like a sign from God become a certainty in her body.

"Yes," I said firmly. "In three days, nurse."

Again I passed a night of torment. It seemed to me as if the nights were becoming more and more tormenting — perhaps

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because the old dreams had been joined by others, by gruesome fancies of severed legs and limbless trunks piled up in baskets.

I crouched down and slowly passed my hand along my right leg, testing every inch, I clasped my knee, its round, movable cap, the shin-bone, the ankle, the toes — everything that was actually so altogether healthy that one would grieve to have it simply thrown away like refuse. I remembered with painful clearness many a thing this leg had done with particular excellence. Was it not the lightning-like wedge that had propelled the football, the limb that had rapidly swung itself across the horse's back when getting into the saddle? Knee, shin, ankle, toes, all were as sound as ever — must I sacrifice it only because a pointed bit of lead had perforated its upper muscle?

I was just beginning to waver once more, to balance my resolve to and fro, when the door was pushed open and big Pod marched as one coming to effect a rescue, followed by little Blank.

"Well, my boy," he said, "here's a looking-glass! It is only a fragment, to be sure, but it does not deceive. . . ."

I held it before my face and looked timidly into it. The last time I had seen myself in a mirror was at the front, and now I shrank. Pod had not exaggerated. A little death's-head looked back at me out of the bit of glass. Its skin lay like thin, yellowish parchment on the bones, its lips were bluish, thin and fleshless, chapped all over, its cheeks sank inward like deep pits. Only my eyes still lived — they were three times as large as they used to be, and had a sickly, burning brilliance.

"It is, unfortunately, no beauty-mirror to flatter," said Pod grumpily.

"Anyway, I have made up my mind," I said slowly. "Even without the looking-glass, Pod."

"'Tis well, my son. When?"

"Day after tomorrow. . . ."

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Little Blank looked at me admiringly with his girlish eyes. "You will get home then, Ensign," he said as if he would like to change places with me.

Before tea someone called from the window: "Look, just look. . . ." All who could rushed to the window benches. "It is just like three months ago," the Viennese called to us. "A new *pogrom* against the Germans — they drowned eight merchants that time!"

We looked out in excitement. On the street beside the river eleven persons were running fast with hundreds of pedlars and labourers at their heels. From all sides the fleeing men were being driven towards the Moskva. Nothing was left for them to do but to jump into it, to save their lives by swimming across. We saw the water splash. A little later eleven heads bobbed up — all had jumped in. "That is enough now, by heaven!" little Blank whispered. No, by the devil, it was not enough. Half a dozen of the *pogrom* pursuers jumped into empty boats and with rapid strokes rowed after the swimming men.

"My God, surely they will not . . . ?" whispered little Blank with rigid lips.

"They will, these beasts . . ." muttered Pod.

He was right, he knew them. One after another they were pushed back by the neck into the water, five, six times, till none came up — like young dogs they drowned them. "But over there one has reached the shore!" Blank cried.

"He had better have been drowned," said Pod. "They told me what they did with the last one. . . ."

It was far to the other shore. Nevertheless, we saw the boats land, and their inmates overtake and surround the fugitive on the open field. All bent down, ten, a hundred times in quick succession. . . . The German fell on his knees, for a long time pleadingly holding up his hands. At last he fell down powerless on his face.

"They have stoned him," said Pod in a hard voice.

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There was a riot in the ward. Were they not Germans, were they not our brothers in arms? No orderly is to be seen, no nurse. All looked on at this spectacle, seemingly in calmness.

"And the police tolerate this?" Blank asked in a low voice. "Just as soon as a few harmless peasants stand together for a little talk, the Cossacks beat into them with their knouts in order to disperse these prohibited gatherings. And here?"

"That all comes from the war!" one cried grimly.

"But these Russians are so pious, so good-natured?" little Blank asked, beside himself. He was a Catholic.

"Just let someone read a Czarist paper to you," said Pod; "then you will know what leads them to such things. . . ."

Little Blank got up. His young face was pale, his thin legs trembled. "I must get to bed," he said. "I can scarcely keep on my feet."

At the door he stood again. "And in this land we are to live?" he added. "Perhaps for months? And as prisoners? Ensign, I would gladly give my leg if I could get out of this hell that way. . . ."

On the day preceding my amputation a tin of preserved peaches, a box of cigarettes, and some matches were standing on my night-table. I had no idea who had brought them, but drew the things with weak hands into my bed and took out a cigarette. I had not smoked for weeks. My God, what a blessing it was! . . . Looking round, I saw that the wood-cutter was following my smoke with yearning eyes. "Do you know who brought them?" I cried as I threw a cigarette over to him.

"Yes," he said readily, "my Lieutenant. He gave me my jew's-harp, too."

Then I remembered having sometimes seen a young Austrian officer in a red hospital-coat at his bed. He had the head of a musician, was of dark complexion, and dragged his left leg behind him.

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"Is that your Lieutenant?" I asked.

"Yes," said the wood-cutter. "I did not know him, but he is of my regiment, that's why he always comes. . . ."

This I understood. But what led him to take any notice of me? That I could not understand. Nevertheless the little gift made me as happy as the finest attention of Pod or Brünn. Pod and Brünn were of my regiment, and as a little fellow I had grown up between them. That accounted for it. Moreover, they knew me from the front, and that also accounted for it. But this one never saw me before, never spoke to me.

Assuredly Pod and Brünn's kind ways kept up one's faith in man — and I should have despaired if I had not had these simple dragoons about me. But this little deed, and that at a moment when I had none of my comrades about me, made me happy in a way in which perhaps nothing else in life will ever make me again.

The cigarette almost made me giddy. Or was it only joy? I relapsed into my brooding. How was it possible that only a short time ago these persons were mercilessly committing murder? I had done so myself certainly — but after daily intercourse with these cripples could I ever do so again?

Sometimes I did not understand myself any more. But was it not terribly difficult to understand that all those deplorable cripples were not victims of some dreadful accident? Was it not incredible that men wanted and made all this, that this helpless trunk in a cart on wheels had not been maimed by a brainless machine, but that a thinking man, with his own hand, had made him what he was now?

I was unnerved, that was it. I should have thought otherwise at the front, but here. . . .

I forced myself to think of Schnarrenberg, my brave sergeant major. Was he still the same, or was he already . . . ? We had all done our duty, nor had we any time for such thoughts so long as we were at the front — it would have been mad to think

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of such things there, because we had to defend ourselves. Our homes lay behind us. But here, away from the war. . . . And, moreover, our hospital, the Grudetzki barracks, was one of the best of the Russian military hospitals, an object for exhibition to Russian Grand Dukes, the show-hospital for neutral commissions. Many thousands of others there were in this enormous realm into which no one ever set foot. How would it look there?

I could not go on. I wanted to cry out. What, at such moments, was a box of cigarettes and a tin of fruit placed by unknown hands on the bed of one unknown — for no other reason than that the latter was seen to suffer? In such hours it was a symbol, a witness to a sane belief in humanity — despite everything. . . .

Towards evening uneasiness became noticeable in the ward. A rumour went round of new transports, and something was heard of an order according to which all the prisoners of war were to be treated by their own physicians, because, in consequence of the new transports, there were scarcely enough Russian doctors for their own wounded.

I thought suddenly of my amputation. Then I should be amputated by a German physician; then there was no more danger for me; then I should surely get over it. I inquired everywhere. It was possible that it was a fabrication such as one of those many reports with which we were flooded daily — all of them only fancies, bred from desire. No, this time it seemed to be truth. . . . Oh, it would be the most sensible truth in the world! Could there be anything more bureaucratically insane than that the physicians who were prisoners of war were not allowed to help their own comrades? And could there be anything more natural than to let those captive physicians follow their work and their profession on behalf of their compatriots, instead of keeping them crowded together and allowing them to perish in prison camps, because they were prohibited

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from giving such help, and would be sorely punished if they did so?

After the evening meal — as usual there was *kàscha,* a coarse dish of hulled barley, which did not agree with our weakened stomachs — I saw that the man with the wounded testicles, for the first time since he lay in the ward, had raised himself out of bed. He came straightway, and with legs apart, up to me and looked at me as if he had been roused from a terrible dream.

"Come, tell me," he began, "you are educated and you must know. Can one do it without?"

"What do you mean, comrade?" I asked, confused.

"They have, you must know —" he opened his underdrawers and made a short motion as if cutting. "Nothing any more, is there?"

Should I tell him the truth? I could not. "Oh yes . . ." I said. "I think so, although . . . no children, I believe. . . ."

"So," he said hoarsely, "only no children. . . ." He was silent for a time, drew a few breaths, took a photograph out of his shirt, and held it before my eyes. A buxom, good-natured-looking girl — just the right kind of a machine to bear children, Brünn would say. "My wife," he said briefly. "We could not afford to have any children, we were not rich enough. But she wants to have six some time, six at least. Without children life was worth nothing, so she always said. . . ." He went back into his bed, stretched out his limbs, and spoke to nobody again until he was sent to Siberia.

When I was carried to the bandaging-room the next morning, there was actually an Austrian regimental physician at the table, a solemn gentleman with a little grey in his hair. "Here comes our youngest," said the dainty nurse, smiling at me encouragingly.

He turned round and looked at me for a while in silence. "Well, what is the matter with you?" he asked.

"I am to be amputated," I said feebly.

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"Amputated? Nonsense!" he exclaimed. I stared at him wide-eyed. He opened the bandage, drew out the drainage tube, introduced an instrument into the passage of the shot, shaking his head disapprovingly. "Incredible!" he muttered to himself. "What did they treat you with lately?"

"With iodine, doctor."

I could see by his look that he would not have withheld a sharp word if the Russian nurse had not been standing next to him. "An amputation is for the present not to be thought of," he said curtly.

My wounds were carefully cleansed, and wet poultices laid on them, nothing further. Nothing was nearly so painful as it had been at the hands of the former physicians. I was so agitated that I impulsively grasped his hands. "All right, all right," he said gruffly, but a smile flitted over his face. "Next, please. . . ."

I lay in bed as if someone had told me that peace had come. I caressed my leg and sang to myself. Lord, was it possible? Was it not a fever fancy? I pinched my rescued leg, rubbed my eyes, felt my forehead. No, I was in my right senses. Besides, it was morning, and everything, everything was true. . . .

In the afternoon Pod came. "I am not going to be amputated, Pod!" I called out to him.

Pod stared at me. "What? I thought today!"

"The Austrian physician . . . 'Nonsense,' said he, only fancy!"

"Do you see?" he said fiercely. "Are they not hogs, those damned surgeons?"

"No, Pod, our doctor with the glass eye was a good man."

"Drat it! What care I for his goodness if it costs me a marching-stick! My God," he continued, "I ought to have known that sooner! I hardly dared to come up! 'Now it is done,' I kept thinking to myself. . . ."

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"Just wait," I said gaily, "I shall get well as soon as you now! But do not hurry. . . ."

He laughed. "I'll take good care not to! We shall not be so well off in Siberia, I fear. . . ." He put his hand in the pocket of his hospital-coat and drew out two pieces of sugar. "Schnarrenberg sends you this," he said shortly. "He also believed that today. . . . Well, drop it!"

"Do you want a cigarette, Pod?" I asked.

"Man," he exclaimed, "whence this wealth? Of course I do. . . ."

"An Austrian Lieutenant brought them to me while I slept!"

"These fellows have a heart, it cannot be denied," Pod said patronizingly.

We smoked like chimneys. "What about the man with the shot through his lungs?" I suddenly asked. Pod shook his head, then said: "Oh, that is only a corpse on leave!"

At last he got up. "Let's go back to our bower," he said, his mind now at rest. "Besides, I need no longer creep on all fours," he added proudly.

I forced a few cigarettes into his hands. "Give Brünn and Schnarrenberg some, too, Pod."

"That's all right!" he said briefly. "See to it that you come down again soon."

The same evening the Austrian Lieutenant came in, went up to the wood-cutter, and sat down on his bed. I waited a bit, then called out: "Please, Lieutenant . . ."

He came at once. "Well," he said smiling, "you appear to be better today?"

"Lieutenant, I should like to —"

"You look almost gay," he interrupted me. "A few days ago I was almost afraid for you. . . ."

"Yes, and then you —"

"Our doctor is clever, isn't he?" he again interrupted me.

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"He is a famous professor from Vienna. I have spoken to him about you."

I gave up thanking him. He did not look as lieutenants usually do. He had the head of an artist and two splendid fiery eyes. "And what did he say?" I asked in suspense.

"That it was a great shame. Your wound only became so dangerously extensive because of wrong treatment. He hopes to remove the suppuration in three to four days. It was high time for your frail body. . . ."

I was silent, breathing rapidly. "Then I shall get quite well?" I asked in a low voice.

"If nothing intervenes, surely. . . ."

"Then," I continued, "then at least half of these poor wretches have lost their limbs without absolute necessity?"

"Undoubtedly," he said firmly, "more than half — two-thirds, according to medical judgment."

Again I was silent. "Tell me, Lieutenant —"

"My name is Brehm," he interposed.

"Lieutenant Brehm, why were our physicians, who were prisoners of war, not allowed to treat us?"

"No one exactly knows," he said in a low voice. "But it is supposed because, in proportion to the Russians, there would not then have been enough cripples among us, and not enough dead. . . ."

Three days afterwards I was carried downstairs. Pod and Brünn saluted in their beds as I joined them again. "Long life to Austria!" cried Pod. His good face beamed like the moon. Even Schnarrenberg's hard features relaxed. "Nothing in the papers yet about peace?" he said by way of greeting. "To think of your coming down again!" said the man with the shot through his lungs. It sounded almost as if it vexed him.

The dainty nurse had kept my old bed free for me. She was a Countess Urusoff, her Christian name being Lida, as I was

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informed by Lieutenant Brehm. Now I understood the pretty little shoes, the silk stockings, the perfectly kept hands — and her few accomplishments. All the nurses in this hospital were society ladies, many of them aristocrats. The tall, dark one, who was so curt and energetic, was even said to be a German from the Baltic and was so unkind to us only because otherwise she would have been accused of secret sympathy, and therefore of treason to her country. Be that as it might, my bed was clean and freshly covered, and on the night-table there were even a few pansies. They stood in my empty preserve-tin.

Almost everything about us had changed. The four dragoons from our brother regiment had gone; two had been sent to Siberia, two had died, so Pod reported. Little Blank had been put in our ward; the dainty nurse had managed that. Of the others near by, only the man with the shot through his lungs was an old acquaintance. After a few minutes he told me that he would soon be well.

My wounds made rapid progress. I could already lift up my coverlet without a feeling of horror. No biting odour of decomposition met me. The peaks of my fever-curve fell lower every day; the nights began to be dreamless; the wound above my knee on my left leg had already closed; the rim of the wound on the upper thigh of my right leg was beginning to itch, and consequently to heal.

My new-old surroundings had a great influence on my rapid improvement. The terrible shrieking at bandaging-time had decreased by half since captive physicians officiated there, and although in general the injuries were not lighter, they were more concealed, less visible at a glance, than in the amputation ward. True, if one were observant and looked a little nearer. . . .

One man had been lying for weeks on water-sacks with one leg over his coverlet. Back and seat had long been bereft of skin — every breath must have caused him terrible pain, for

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he moaned unceasingly. Another, with a shot through his bladder, had a long tube hanging from under his quilt, a tube from which black and bloody drops oozed out into a bowl. A third had a shot through his stomach. Anything he tried to swallow at once exuded through the passage of the shot — if his wound were not to heal in time, he must surely starve to death.

A shell-splinter had torn the flesh from another man's kidneys. He would have to lie on his stomach for months, perhaps. His kidneys were exposed, and their corrosive contents ate into his muscles. In our ward were two with eyes shot out, three with terrible abdominal wounds, two with shots in the rectum which could never heal because the physicians had not means at their command to prevent their constant pollution, and one with the entire lower jaw missing, who would have to be fed through tubes all his life.

"Schnarrenberg," I asked suddenly, "shall you ever be able to shoot again?"

He started up in some amazement. I distinctly saw that he was at war with himself, that in him, too, something new was struggling, wanting to get out of him — but that it was too new, too weak.

"Of course," he snarled angrily. "What else?"

Again our days passed on in the old round of bandaging, eating, sleeping. Nevertheless we were surrounded by a new atmosphere. We old inmates had the feeling that what was hardest lay behind us, and we were now getting medicines — stimulating and cleansing remedies. A few of us even got something that the Russians called "*slabo,*" only a sort of miserable porridge, to be sure, but better assimilated by our weakened stomachs than the national food, the black *kascha.*

We occupied ourselves in attempting to walk in the quiet afternoon hours. As a matter of course, we only did this when no one was in the ward, and a slightly wounded man always

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stood on watch at the door to detain any unexpected nurse or orderlies with questions until we had reached our beds again. We did not want to get to Siberia any sooner than was necessary, and we very well knew that we should be mercilessly sent there the very minute an ill-disposed orderly saw us run about.

As I was about to make my first attempt at walking, Pod shoved two crutches under my shoulders. I had to learn to walk again like a child, and if Pod and Blank had not carefully supported me, I should have fallen down, despite my crutches, like a drunken man. My legs had lost all power, and also my arms. Notwithstanding this, we all practised daily — because we never knew when they would drive us out, and because we slept so well afterwards.

Oh, God! At home all this would have been professionally supervised and carried out! There they had gymnastic apparatus; enervated muscles were electrified and massaged with strengthening ointments — here there was nothing, nothing but two crutches made of bamboo-cane and covered with oilcloth! And had we not even to borrow those from the amputated or to steal them? We had to try in secret to get on our feet again; but how many never got so far because no one took pity on them? And how many who, after a little assistance, might have been able to walk again as they once did kept stiff or shortened limbs for the rest of their lives because there were not even the most primitive instruments, the simplest remedies, at hand?

Usually Pod summoned us for the Kino hour after these walking tests. All near by collected at his window to watch those hundreds of people bathing naked in the warm waters of the Moskva. They were, for the greater part, older men and women, but there were young and pretty girls among them, too.

"One ought to have glasses," said Brünn, the great erotic. "A real telescope. . . ."

Pod reproved him. "You can never get enough, Brünn."

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"Man! Just fancy if that were customary with us; without a rag, without a fig-leaf even!"

"Then you'd put electricity on the shelf and become swimming-master, eh?" called out a new-comer. All broke into a roar of laughter.

Just then a dark-haired girl let down her skirts and remained standing a moment, brightly illuminated by the summer sun. She had powerful, unspoiled limbs and a brownish skin. Her rump was voluptuousness itself.

"By thunder!" said Brünn appreciatively. "She is well padded."

"I like more in front," said Pod dreamingly.

"That's because you don't understand anything," Brünn retorted. "In front a girl ought to have only so much as one can grasp with one hand. There should be more somewhere else."

Devout silence followed this dictum. The eyes of all watched the young girl with a peculiar expression as she slowly stepped into the water, bent down, sprinkled her breasts with her outspread hand, and slowly dived into the green of the water.

"Man! just imagine that for once we could have something so soft in our cold bachelor beds!" Brünn called out enthusiastically.

"It is easily to be seen that you are regaining strength," said Pod smilingly.

"You will soon be sent to Siberia — to cool off!" someone added with a sneer.

Our daily afternoon Kino hour passed all too quickly with this *badinage*. All joined in it, except Schnarrenberg and Blank. While, however, Schnarrenberg secretly listened — to take part in our conversation would, in his opinion, be incompatible with his military rank — little Blank, the girl, lay blushing in his bed. It could clearly be seen that he was desperately trying not to hear our strong expressions.

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The nights became quieter and quieter. When the dainty nurse came, she found me in my full senses. She scarcely ever said more than her softly whispered "*Spatsch.*" One evening, however, a few days after my return to the lower ward, she sat down in silence at my bed, looking at me with eyes in which subdued pain seemed to linger. Was she ashamed, perhaps, on account of my amputation affair? And because, now that the Russian doctors did not treat us any more, there was not half so much noise in the ward, and convalescence became much quicker?

"What ails you, nurse?" I asked in a low voice.

"I just wanted to tell you . . ."

"Please go on, nurse."

"I only wanted to ask you not to think badly of our country, of our people! He — the Russian — is not bad; he is only lazy, lazy and encouraged to be indifferent! We are backward in everything, far behind, that's it . . ."

I took courage, seized her hand, and kissed it timidly.

"Oh, you cannot believe how hard it is for us," she exclaimed, "to have to see everything, not to be able to do anything against it! Every friendly act, every humane deed, is reported and may cost us Siberia or our estates, but I do not submit. I work day and night to lessen the shame upon our country . . ."

At last one morning, despite all wishes to the contrary, the dreaded hour arrived. All the beds were newly covered with clean linen; all bottles and chambers thoroughly cleansed.

"Here, Potemkin is not dead yet," cried Pod across to me. "You'll see, the commission will come today!"

He was right. Pod was always right; he had a nose for such things, the scent of a regular pointer. Shortly after the midday meal the dreaded event came. An orderly stormed in, bellowing like a bull: "Attention!" An entire suite appeared at the door — a surgeon-general, three doctors of lesser rank, a group of

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surgeons, and a couple of nurses. Of our doctors there was nothing to be seen.

Bed after bed was visited. "Get up, get up." The orderlies placed crutches under the arms of one after another of us. "There, now try!" said the surgeon-general in his clipped German. He had a sharp, dried-up hawk's face and spoke as if he were commanding a squadron.

Pod, Brünn, and Blank were ahead of me. When the crutches were handed to Pod, he humbly shook his shaggy bear's head. "*Nitschewo* . . ." he said in a friendly way. It was his one Russian word.

A couple of nurses laughed. The surgeon-general looked at him as if he would have liked to have him shot. A glance at his herculean frame sufficed him. "All right," he cried. "Next."

Pod drew his longest face, cast his eyes across to us as if looking for help. I shrugged my shoulders. What could I do? Little Blank's manner soothed the surgeon-general. Blank accepted the offered crutches and cautiously walked up and down two or three times in the space by his bed, like a good boy. "All right, next." When he got to Brünn, there was trouble again. The very moment that he felt the crutches under his shoulders, and the orderlies withdrew their support, Brünn fell full-length on the floor and screamed pitifully as if he were being burned at the stake. He was lifted up and his wound examined. It was closed. "When did you come?" asked the hawk's head. The dark sister reported that he had been lying there for three months. "All right," said the all-powerful one, pleased. "All right," Brünn grinned after him.

I was the next. "Get up, get up!" I rose with difficulty. "*Kastille, Kastille!*" cried the surgeon-general. My arms were lifted, the crutches slipped from under my shoulders, and I was left to stand alone. Everything turned round before my eyes, and my right leg swung like the pendulum of a clock. I could not place it on the floor, try as I might. "Walk! Walk!"

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cried the hawk's head. Slowly I set my left leg forward and swayed back and forth like a drunkard. "Go on, go on!"

At this moment the dainty nurse stepped forward. "He has not left his bed before now, Your Excellency," she said bravely.

"Oh," he laughed menacingly. "At a second trial he will run like a borzoi."

"But he is excessively weak, Your Excellency."

"Thanks. I can see that for myself. I am a doctor! Anyway, he need not walk; he will ride for weeks — as far as Siberia. Long before he will have recovered! No, no, all right. We need room. Next. . . ."

With a short look he went past the man with a shot through his lungs.

"Oh, God," the latter whispered to himself, "Oh, God . . . and I? What about me? I should like to get out! I shall be well soon. . . . Why, why does he pass me by . . . ?"

"Thunder and blazes, 'twill be in a minute now," said Pod in the afternoon. "We need not be secret about it any more. I shall go down to the court and sun myself a bit."

In three or four days I was also able to get down to the court with the help of Pod and Brünn. The stairs, to be sure, were a little hindrance still, but the lure of the sun caused all difficulties to seem light.

From the first landing of the stairs, where I had to wait some time to get my breath, an unexpected view presented itself. The Kremlin lay before our eyes. Gigantic walls enclosed hundreds of cupolas, some of poisonous green, others of pure gold or azure-blue, and of all shapes. I saw them for the first time, and a flood of what I had once heard and read swept over me. But the view did not make anything clearer to me. Rather, it seemed to me as if the mystery of this country became more impenetrable, the strangeness of this life more incomprehensible.

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"So much gold is said to lie in there that all the misery in the world could be done away with by its means," said Brünn.

I shrugged my shoulders. What should I say to this? I should not become clearer in my mind about what this picture awakened in me if I were to look at it for days; I felt attracted and repelled and knew no reason for either. Did it proceed from the mixture in my blood, from my heritage from my mother?

"Let us go into the sun," I said at last.

In the court I came at once upon Lieutenant Brehm. A grenade had made a stump of one of his feet. Walking with a stick and dragging his left leg behind him, he came at once to meet me.

"Well," he said heartily, "for the first time in the sun? That does more to make one well than four weeks of bed. But wait, I'll get you a chair. . . ."

He came back with a chair, let me slowly down into it, and sat down beside me on a bench. Pod and Brünn were hobbling across the court and, supporting each other, laid their faces together at the railing that enclosed the entire space. It was the boundary to a street in which the life of Moscow pulsated in strong colours, and in which there was incredibly much to be seen for sharpened, starved eyes: coachmen and policemen, workmen and — girls.

"The commission has visited you?" asked Brehm.

"Yes, recently. It was a spectacular play."

"Then you will get away soon."

"To Siberia, eh?"

"Yes, although it was distinctly agreed that in case of war no prisoners should be sent to Siberia."

"So even this is not permitted?"

"Of course not, but what does Russia care about agreements? It is, and remains today, as it was three hundred years ago, the realm of arbitrariness."

"And why were these agreements made?"

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"Because the climate of Siberia is unbearable for central Europeans! Fifty degrees of cold in winter, and fifty degrees of heat in summer. Who can stand that? No, let us speak of something else. Why bother yourself about it now?"

I only nodded. How blessed the sun was! I put out my hands to its rays, spread out my fingers, closed them again. My God, they had become regular spider-legs, white, wrinkled, bloodless. The skin could have been drawn away in long strips.

After a while he left me. A German Guards officer, a long, over-slender man, Klemt by name, addressed me. We exchanged a few sentences, and he inquired in an agreeably sympathetic way how my wound was, how I was feeling.

"You have had the devil's own luck! But why are you not put with us into the officers' ward?" he asked in conclusion.

"No," I said quickly. "I have comrades — comrades who care for me like brothers! I should like to stay with them as long as possible. With my knowledge of languages I can be useful to them in many a way. And they have no one else who could help them. . . ."

I stretched myself and was lost in dreams. Moscow — Kremlin — Siberia. Was it not really like a dream? Suddenly the barred gates opened and an ambulance rattled in over the gravel. Two splendid Orloffs trotted quickly past me, described an elegant curve, and came to a halt two paces in front of me.

A long-missed smell of sweat and horse's hair came to me. Could there be a more beautiful symbol for me on the first day of sun, on my first day out? The horses remained standing in front of me for a whole hour. Their bell-like hoofs pawed the gravel now and then. Their gorgeous trappings rang in time to their nodding.

I did not stir. My eyes glided over every part of the noble bodies, from their red, distended nostrils to the curly hair of their tails, which almost touched the ground. I should have liked to lay my fingers on their silk-like faces, but I could not,

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as yet, stand without help. I would have keeled over at the slightest pressure of their heads. No, I must give that up. But my eyes tried to make up for it and examined their bodies inch by inch, so to speak. They were of that breed made famous by Russia's sleighing races. They had hooked rams' noses, low backs, chests of steel, and ankles like a bear's paws. Their great eyes looked at me fixedly, their fine ears waved listeningly towards me. "Zelle, old beast of section Z . . ." I suddenly thought.

I drew in the smell of their sweat like an invigorating elixir. I slowly, slowly felt along my right leg. Yes, it was still there. I had it still. I was rich.

During the following night the man with the shot through his lungs died. He passed away quietly and unnoticed. When I awoke in the morning, I saw that he was lying in bed with open mouth full of red, dried little bubbles. Later I learnt that he had entered a complaint and asked for a bill of health because the commission had passed him by. That he was almost well and that he would like to get out were the reasons he had given.

I took my crutches so that I might go out until they had carried him away. I almost seemed to miss his grumbling, his constant faultfinding. However, I took this walk every morning as soon as I woke up; for I preferred dragging myself painfully down to the water-closet to using any longer the commode, which was hardly ever cleaned and nearly always so full that it could not be used.

To be sure, that was now a thing of the past. Oh, it was not a trifling matter that was now done with! At first it drove me to despair to sit on this commode, supported by two men and in the presence of all — then I got used to it as one got used to everything. But a new hell had come in its place, this expedition itself. It was difficult and painful, that did not matter. But it was a walk through rows of the dead, that was it. . . .

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The great morning cleansing only began about eight o'clock. It was only at eight o'clock that the beds were looked after, the new corpses carried away. When I had to go, they were all still lying as they had died, and no morning went by without my having to go through the long ward past ten or twelve dead to get to the door. Often their arms or legs, convulsed by the death-struggle, were stretched out so far into the aisle that I could scarcely wind my way between them. Some lay naked on the floor, some hung half out of their beds, and many had bloody mouths, rigid in the last cry. Almost all, however, had open eyes, looking at one strangely with their glassy pupils; for from the moment when the orderlies learnt that a man was likely to die, they did not trouble any more about him, but let him die as he must and could — among a thousand human beings, and yet like a beast in the field. . . .

At noon the dark nurse told us that the order for transportation had come. "Tomorrow, very early. . . ." She said it shortly and concisely, but it seemed to me as if her pretty lips were trembling. "Have you any wish?" she asked me.

I hesitated a little. There was something I wanted, but I knew that it was forbidden, that she dared not grant my wish. "I should like to have a knife," I said timidly, "a tiny little penknife. We cannot even cut our bread. . . ."

"That is not allowed to prisoners of war!" she said curtly, and went away.

Had I been mistaken after all? Well, be it so. . . . The next moment Pod came across. "Now the thunderbolt has fallen," he said gloomily. "Fortunately we stay together, but I wanted to say," he continued, "I should like to learn Russian, I shall need it on the way — we meet people, don't we? Will you teach it to me?"

"Certainly, Pod, I will get a couple of copy-books from the officers, perhaps a Russian grammar; then we can soon begin."

"Grammar?" said Pod astonished. "What do I want a

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grammar for? And I have enough paper myself. . . ." He drew forth a dirty bit of paper and wet his pencil. "How do you say 'hunger'? " he asked dictatorially.

"*Golod,*" said I.

"*Golod,*" he repeated, taking the pencil and writing: "hunger — *golod.*"

"Meat? " he asked.

"*Mjassa.*"

"*Mjassa,*" he said, writing: "meat — *mjassa.*"

"Bread? " he asked further.

"*Chljeb.*"

"*Chljeb,*" he wrote. "Butter? " he then asked.

"*Masslo.*"

"*Masslo.* . . . Eggs? "

"*Jeiza.*"

"*Jeiza.* . . . No money? "

"*Djängi njetu.*"

"*Djängi njetu* — no money! " he wrote in big letters on his paper, folded it up in the old creases very carefully, and got up.

"Thank you," he said, "that's enough for me. I shall get along with that. I don't need to know any more of this confounded language. . . ."

Scarcely was the morning's clearing of dead bodies over before the orderlies came in with long bags. They looked at the numbers on our tablets and threw a sack down beside the bed of each one of us "healthy ones." All our clothes were in them, from boots to cap, just as they had been taken from us the day we were brought in.

"Go ahead! Get up, get up! " We crept somewhat depressed out of our blankets, but when we had emptied the sacks and spread out our old uniforms before us, we quickly recovered our spirits. It was as if, with our riding-boots and tunics, a bit of the vigorous and manly spirit which we had possessed while

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still young and hopeful had entered into us again, a spirit which in the times of crutches and trailing hospital-coats we had often lacked and, perhaps in greater part, lost. Perhaps mixed with this was also the feeling that pain and lying in bed were over for ever, that we were soldiers again, and that, though nothing good was ahead of us, we were again getting out into the world among others than those moaning and dying men. Yes, we should again hear other words than calls for orderlies and nurses, see other things besides wounds and pus and death.

Our underwear was washed, but not mended. Holes torn by bullets still gaped in riding-breeches and coats. "Never mind," said little Blank, the girl, "I can sew nicely — I'll darn everything for you."

Pod helped me to put on my riding-boots. It was a difficult task, because my right leg could not yet bear any pressure or exercise. At last we were sitting on our beds, all ready dressed and looking with surprised eyes from one to another. Something had totally altered us. Brünn's coarse jokes were left untold, Pod suddenly called me by my title again, Schnarrenberg even moved a little apart. It looked as if the braid and buttons had all at once regained their old distinction.

I called "Pod" three times for no other reason than ostentatiously to emphasize his nickname and my familiar address. . . . "Pod," I said at last, "am I someone else than I was two hours ago?"

"Yes, Ensign."

"How so?"

"In those confounded hospital-coats we were all alike, but now. . . ."

"But I do not want any change between us, Dragoon Podbielski!"

"At your service, Ensign," he said laughingly, and became his old self again.

We had nothing to carry except what was on our bodies.

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I had not even a cap, because I had had on an officer's helmet, which a Cossack officer had taken from me as a war souvenir, and many had had one or other of their garments stolen out of the bags while they were in storage. A few appeared in underdrawers, a few in shirt-sleeves. No one had thought of giving them fresh garments. In the court a few sentries awaited us with fixed bayonets. "Men, why don't you have a couple of cannons also?" cried Brünn.

Lieutenant Brehm was standing at the gate. He pressed both my hands and finally said: "I should like to give you something for the journey!" It was a bank-note of ten roubles, a fortune for me, for us all. It was doubtful whether there was a single copeck among the entire transport. "To be repaid at home!" he said smilingly. I could not answer. I could only press his hands more firmly.

When we were just about to march off, the dainty nurse came hurrying down the stairs. "Where is the *Junker?*" I heard her call. "There, there, here," roared Pod.

I was standing between Pod and Brünn. She stepped up to us, gave us each a silver rouble, and looked at me for a long time. "I wish you happiness and health," she said softly, fumbling at her apron and shoving a small parcel into my pocket. "It is from your dark nurse!" she said hastily, her little hand trembling. "Never forget what I once told you — whatever may come!" she added with difficulty.

"*Po tschetiri* — in fours!" shouted a *starschi*, a sergeant major. She tore herself away and hastened off. Pod, I, Brünn, and Blank formed a line. In the front row were Schmidt I and Schnarrenberg. None of the rest of our regiment had come with us. We were perhaps parted for ever.

The barred gate opened and we marched out. But the marching soon came to an end. One after another dropped behind. The train became longer and longer, more and more broken. It was

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a hot day in autumn; none were accustomed to the heavy boots; many of them, like myself, had hardly walked at all until this morning. Our armpits began to hurt from the crutches, and the long boots pulled like weights at our feet. "Boys, I must sit down for a bit," I said at last. I was not the only one. Here and there a few others were sitting on the curb-stone — pale, miserable, panting. We sat down, four in a row. The stones were warm, and it was confoundedly comfortable. In front of us small coaches were hastening by, crowded street-cars rolled past, gaily dressed women promenaded. Brünn was just going to crack a joke about a fat peasant woman when one of the sentinels dug me in the back from behind with the butt-end of his gun. "Get ahead with you, German devil!"

Pod jumped up as if he had been stung. "You haven't puked any guts for long, have you?" he roared. "Want to beat poor cripples, eh?" A mob gathered, and all the women took our part. Pod went on open-heartedly — what did it matter, since he did not know Russian? His pointing to our crutches and wounds, the indignant sound of his voice, was understood by all — and who, for that matter, could withstand the faithful eyes of a St. Bernard?

Then Brünn cleverly remembered the word "hunger," the crowning word of the phrase-book, which had in the mean while become famous, and hurled it at the mob. Moreover, he took off his cap and held it out in front of him. Everyone in the crowd put his hand into his pocket, and a rich stream of copecks flowed into the cap. "Forty copecks," he said, grinning. "By thunder, we ought to repeat this spectacle at every street-corner."

All were in high good humour, and Schnarrenberg alone was furious. "I notice that you are forgetting your uniform, Brünninghaus," he said severely.

At noon the last houses were passed and the street ended in a potato-field. Beside a peasant's house we were allowed to rest and

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sit down in a meadow. I distributed my last cigarettes, and, notwithstanding that we were all tired to death, we were really in a happy frame of mind. At such moments Brünn usually found the right word. "Let come what may," he cried, "at all events it is much nicer than in that great chest of woe!"

Our stages became shorter and shorter. We did not get anything to eat, and we had to quench our thirst at some pump or other. "I shall soon gnaw at one of these wooden posts," grumbled Pod. The guards had given up trying to drive us on. Did they themselves see that it was impossible? Our armpits were burning as if red-hot coals lay on top of our crutches. Our feet, unaccustomed to walking on roads, were blistered. "They have always been, and will always be, unmitigated hogs, these Russians!" said Schnarrenberg in a tone of conviction. "Could they not at least have requisitioned a few Panje wagons for us?"

"Or a couple of stylish automobiles?" added Brünn.

At last, towards evening, as we crossed a railway embankment, we saw in front of us a small barrack, enclosed by a high fence of boards. The yard swarmed with people. "This is Ugrieschskaja, the great distribution centre," I said. "Rather lilliputian," remarked Brünn. "We shall hardly be able to turn round properly with our crutches in this hole," nodded Pod.

The gate opened. We were counted off. "By the Lord — it tallies! None of us has run away!" said Brünn mockingly. We were taken into a shed with room for a hundred men and left to our fate. What did it matter to the Russians that there were two hundred of us?

"The lightly wounded to one side!" called out Schnarrenberg, the senior in rank in the transport, in his voice of command. He was right; he, at least, desired to leave room for the severely wounded to lie down.

"Shut your mouth!" some voices cried from the back-

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ground. "We are no longer in the barracks-yard — d'ye hear? " I hobbled quickly to his side. " Don't get excited, Schnarrenberg," I said hastily. " It will do well enough so. . . ."

He was hanging in his crutches as if about to fall. His hard soldier's face was as white as chalk. " What was that, Ensign? " he panted. " What did they say? " " Nothing, Schnarrenberg, nothing, come with me. . . ."

In the mean while Pod had lain down on a plank bed in such a way as to make room for us all if we made ourselves as thin as possible. Just as I was coming through the crowd with Schnarrenberg, I heard him say perfectly calmly in his deep voice: " You haven't spit out any teeth for a long time, eh? The place here is for my *Junker* — that settles it."

I lay down at his side. At the same moment I felt something hard in my pocket. It was the parcel from the dark nurse. I opened it and found a small, brown penknife.

When I woke up, it was broad daylight. Pod was already sitting next to me bending forward. The upper part of his body was naked, and his shirt was on his knees. " Damn it all," he greeted me. " Were you able to sleep? "

" Yes, Pod. I was terribly tired."

" I could not manage to. In a couple of hours I was being bitten as if I lay among a colony of ants. Now we shall be molested again with those confounded little insects — I have already mobilized an advance guard of ten men."

Our whole bodies felt bruised. We were not used to lying fully dressed on hard wood without pillows and blankets. Also, on account of our wounds, we could lie only on one side, could never change our position. And what that signified . . .

I slid slowly down from the bed. . . . " Is there water anywhere for washing, Pod? "

" No, my son, we wash with tea-water, I have heard. That

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replaces the soap. Besides, this camp is not commanded by a man, but by a female, a Czech."

"How is this?"

"Ha ha, because she wears the breeches, not her lord and husband! She is said to be a beast. . . . She demands that all badges and rank distinctions be dropped; she exchanges German money at the rate of sixty pfennigs for one mark, and she puts half the money for our board into her own pocket! Genuinely Russian, eh?"

In Ugrieschskaja all nationalities were sorted out, all the Slavs, Roumanians, Italians, and Poles from the Austrian Army, and all the Alsatians and men from Schleswig-Holstein from the German Army. "Why so?" we asked. These people went into better camps, we were told. "That would be an opportunity," Brünn mused. "I am from the Danish coast!" Cries of "Fie! fie!" silenced him. "Don't you know that it would be treason?" someone called out to him. "You must vote for Denmark later. Stupid fellow, do you think you will get anything for nothing?" "I only thought . . ." muttered Brünn in confusion.

In the mean while I had glanced round the shed. Ugrieschskaja was far too small for the number of those who must often wait there for months until transported to Siberia or Turkestan. The main space was occupied by a dark shed supplied with plank beds, our sleeping-places. In the centre there was an open platform which for some occult reason was called *kikeriki* by the soldiers. On this there stood a few rows of iron camp-bedsteads with boards, but without mattresses or blankets. Those were the couches for the captive officers.

I strolled about this platform in the hope of discovering a comrade from my regiment, but I was not successful; for they were mostly Austrians and Hungarians. There were two German officers sitting apart in a corner, but no familiar uniform, no familiar face. When I got back to my place,

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Blank was just coming with tea, a cloudy, yellowish liquid, which only tasted good because it was hot and we could not get the frost of the night out of our bones without something warming inside. A dense, damp, biting atmosphere prevailed — it was the odour that had sometimes struck us out of thickly populated gipsy wagons. How could it have been otherwise? Many had already lived for weeks on those wooden beds, unwashed and without having taken off their clothes even for one night. Many still had open wounds, or were covered with vermin up to the neck. Some had bad-smelling bandages on their limbs; for there was no means of changing them even once. Some ran about half naked because during their stay in hospital some of their garments had been stolen. Some were already in the last stage of consumption. The uncertainty of what was to become of us was beginning to lie on us like a great weight. If we could but know. . . .

We drank our tea in haste so that we might get another pot to wash with. "First of all we must try to get a tea-kettle for ourselves," said Brünn. "It is the very first thing we must get," I upheld him by saying. "Nobody counts for anything in Russia with out a *tscheinik!*"

"If we only had a couple of cigarettes!" sighed Brünn. "Everything is bearable if one only has a cigarette in the corner of one's mouth. . . ." "As soon as we get out, Brünn," I said, to comfort him. "Are we not rich?"

"A little while ago I saw someone with a good extra cap," said Pod. "It would just fit you, *Junker*. Shall I bargain with him for it? You can't run about all your life without a louse-warmer." "All right, Pod."

He came back with a well-preserved cap having a shield in front. "A silver rouble," he said radiantly. "It is only from a strand-plover," he added, thrusting in his fists and widening it until it fitted me.

"I wonder if this existence is meant as a foretaste of our

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future camp life?" questioned little Blank. One could distinctly hear that he was depressed.

"No," I said decidedly. "I don't believe so. That would really be . . . No, it is only a transition. To economize in regard to space in such an enormous country — would that not be contrary to all reason?"

"Moreover, we should be dead in no time," Pod muttered.

"Yes," Blank agreed, "yes, it is autumn now, and we can stand it. But I have been told that this serves as central camp in winter also — at fifty degrees below zero!"

"Then thousands have already frozen to death on these boards," muttered Pod.

After a while Brünn returned from an exploring expedition. "Boys," he said, "we are fortunate. The first comers have been waiting here for five weeks. With us the transport is full. In three days we are to go on. . . ."

"Where to?" asked Schnarrenberg. It was his first word since the previous evening.

"Madam Commandant says: 'To Siberia'!" answered Brünninghaus.

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On the fourth morning the higher officers were summoned before the commander. Would we really go? When Schnarrenberg returned, he looked almost gay. "The Lord be praised!" he said, drawing a deep breath. "We are to go on!" He stepped with renewed military bearing into the middle of our platoon and called out in his sharp, commanding voice: "Get ready for marching! Step forward in two lines!"

We placed our crutches under our arms and stood up. On the right wing Pod stood like a pillar, his *tscheinik* dangling from a rope round his waist. We stood unnoticed in the court until noon. Schnarrenberg, pelted with angry cries from all sides, bit his lips as his gaiety rapidly disappeared. He was certainly not responsible, but was there any longer justice in the world?

At last the commander's wife appeared, a woman with a sharp nose. "Does anybody want to change his money yet?" she asked sweetly.

"No, I kiss your hand, madam!" said Brünn distinctly.

A couple of men in the second line laughed.

"May the devil take you," said this ladylike person as she walked away.

At three o'clock the great gate was opened and our troop crept out like caterpillars. At the railway station was a train composed of fifty to sixty cattle-cars. "We must try to get on the parlour floor," said Brünn, meaning the upper plank beds.

We came to a stop in front of the cars. "Count off forty," cried out Schnarrenberg. "Stop, stop, what's the matter . . . ?" he called. In an instant the whole troop broke up into a thousand combatants who ruthlessly stormed the cars and tried, by blows and kicks, to gain the upper beds.

We had no need to hurry; we had our Pod. He was the first to sit on the upper plank bed of a car, and as he did so, he

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called out in his deep voice: "Whoever gets up here had better count his bones first!"

There are four plank beds in a Russian cattle-car, two upper and two lower, to the right and left of the sliding doors. "Forty divided by four arithmetically amounts to ten per bed!" proclaimed Brünn. "Damn and blast it! — are we herrings?"

He was right. Such a place was hardly enough for six, but might hold ten if all lay on one side and did not stir. We upper ones had two little windows to the right and left and were able to see something. The dust and vermin dropped through the cracks in our boards on to the eyes of those lying underneath and stayed there half the night. But there was no mercy; in the end all the healthy ones landed on the upper plank beds, while the sick and wounded crept into the dark holes which nobody wanted.

In the evening a troop of guards came marching up. A heavily armed man stepped into each car, selected the best place for himself, and shoved aside those next to him with the butt-end of his gun. "Don't make yourselves too comfortable, you hogs!"

In our car were Hungarians and Austrians, Styrians and Tyrolese, two sturdy Bavarians, one Saxon, one from Berlin, two from Hamburg, besides the men of our regiment. In the corner were four Galicians, small, hook-nosed Jews with cork-screw locks, polite and obliging little persons whose strange language sounded amusing to us.

The sun was already setting when a large naphtha locomotive rattled over the switches. With a few jerks the train moved on. "Where are we going, anyway?" asked little Blank. "I don't know," snarled Schnarrenberg.

"Do you know where we are going to?" I asked the guard.

"Shut up, I want to sleep!"

We climbed down from the beds, opened one of the two

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sliding doors, and crouched down in front of the opening. Level land went past us, peasants' farm-houses, from the windows of which shone the mild glow of lamps. The hay had long since been cut, but now and then a heavily loaded Panje wagon came along, drawn by small poor-looking horses. Peasants clad in gay smocks walked beside them, and young girls in white blouses sat on the hay. A chorus of ringing soprano voices, accompanied by deep basses, rose up into the dark evening sky.

We listened in silence. The fingers of a heavy hand seemed to penetrate deep into our hearts.

"At my home," said Pod slowly, "my wife is most likely sowing the winter wheat. . . ."

I only nodded. My eyes gazed into the distance. How that girl was singing . . . !

"At my home," continued Pod, "my Anna has long since harvested the hay. . . ."

My head fell on my chest. The train rattled on monotonously. Eastward, eastward! the wheels rattled. Who knew whither?

"At my home . . ." began Pod.

At this moment a man behind us began to sing. Three, four, half the car, softly joined in. . . . Ah! must it not come true one day?

Teure Heimat meiner Lieben,
Denk ich still an dich zurück. . . .

The country in front of us, the strange, strange country, became darker and darker. We could see only its lights, feel only the smell of its meadows, perceive only the breath of its wind. At our backs the singing grew louder, in the car the sound grew more and more fervent.

Sei gegrüsst in weiter Ferne,
Teure Heimat — sei gegrüsst.

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Little Blank got up softly and crept silently into the dark corner of his wooden bed. Pod suddenly clapped his hands in front of his face. His heavy body shook and I felt him leaning at my side.

"What is it, Pod?" I asked softly. "Are you sick?"

He drew his head still deeper down between his shoulders. "If they would only stop singing that confounded song!" he muttered hoarsely.

Night came. I could not sleep. The wound in my left side, which had been bitten by lice, pained me as if I had been stung. I forced my way carefully out between my comrades, Brünn on my right, Pod on my left. Brünn was asleep, with open mouth, looking a little foolish. Pod resembled a sleeping bear. All lay at full length on their left sides; all had their faces turned in one direction.

We changed our position every evening. One day all would be on the left, the next on the right, side. In no other way was it possible for all ten to sleep at the same time. But the nights when we lay on the right side were nights of torture for me, because on the right side was my largest and scarcely healed wound.

A dim little petroleum lamp flickered in the centre of the car. I sat down on the floor and leaned my back against the sliding door. To the right and left at a height of about half a yard were the lower plank beds, rough boards which, at slightest touch, splintered the skin. From time to time a sleeper uttered a hoarse curse, another drew in his breath with a deep consumptive sound.

I remembered the war. This was its reverse side, I thought. I thought of everything, of severe wounds, even of my own death. But then. . . . How splendid were our attacks! Each man forgot himself, and all pettiness fell away from him! The individual was lost, the mass took its place, and everyone knew: "I must sacrifice myself — my Fatherland lies at

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my back. . . ." That was not senseless, that was grand and rich! But here . . .

Someone got up in the Hungarian's corner. He glided, half awake, to my door, slid it back a little, let his trousers down, knelt down on his knees, and shoved himself along the floor as far as the crack.

A load weighed me down. I lowered my head and tried to go on thinking. In vain. . . . At times there was a stir on my plank bed. The guard snored loudly, Brünn cursed in a low voice, Pod sighed in his sleep. "Anna . . ." he said in his deep voice. "Anna . . ."

I put my fingers into my ears. These journeys often lasted for months, I thought, discouraged. Day after day, night after night. Could it be endured? The dim lamp swayed, the wheels rattled, the guard snored.

Again one of the Hungarians crept out. It was the gipsy, a wild, black rider of the plains. The light fell on him. He saw me plainly, but that did not trouble him. . . . Was he in pain? After a while he began to pant. His face became fixed and he opened his mouth as if athirst. Suddenly I heard a long-drawn groan, and saw him fall back as if relieved. Must I cover up my eyes also, oh, God?

Pod cursed at the food. "It is not only little, but bad," he growled. "On my farm at home we give the hogs what we get here! *Kascha, kascha* — what is that? Grains are better . . ."

"At home the prisoners must also starve!" Brünn muttered crossly.

"But only because our own people must starve themselves," said Schnarrenberg severely. "Why do they blockade us when it is contrary to all international law? Russia is not blockaded. It should not be necessary for Russia to let us starve to death."

Brünn was silenced. He was still a little afraid of

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Schnarrenberg, partly out of a soldier's respect for a superior rank, partly from a bad conscience because of some unpleasant passages in his military record.

After we had bribed our guard, called *konvoi,* with fifty copecks, we were allowed to get out at the stations to make purchases. At all railway stations were tables on which peasant women piled up their wares. Everything one wanted was there, and ridiculously cheap. If one understood how to bargain a little, one could get a freshly roasted duck for forty copecks, a chicken for thirty, a fat goose, crisp and dripping, for seventy.

"And these dogs allow us to starve on thin broth!" Schnarrenberg repeated.

Scarcely had the train stopped at a station when Pod, Brünn, and Blank jumped out. Blank, with his *tscheinik,* had to get the hot water for the tea which was to be had at every station free of charge. Brünn went his own way, which always led him into the neighbourhood of some peasant girls, but Pod was a faithful purchaser.

I often saw him from my car. He stepped with a look of a connoisseur to each stand, took hold of things, felt them, dug his fingers into them, his nose almost curling up at the variety of odours. Finally he would draw out his paper, that wonderful paper which began with "hunger" and ended with "no money," and between these two prisoner symbols — Pod's most important words — all those things which were the dreams of his ever empty stomach.

After a while he would come back with some titbit. "Man, *Junker,*" he said after his first expedition, "if we had more money — I do believe that in this blessed country I could get enough to eat for once. . . ."

At a small station I got out with Schnarrenberg. We hobbled up and down slowly and somehow missed the guard's signal to get on. Even before we understood in what way we

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had sinned, the guard had dug into my side with the butt of his gun so that I almost stopped breathing. I ran hurriedly to our car. "Come, Schnarrenberg, for God's sake," I called out.

He did not heed me. Perhaps he thought that he knew the Russians better. "Confounded scoundrel," he roared at the *konvoi.* "What are you thinking of to abuse us so?"

"Do you dare answer back, Hun?"

Putting his finger in his mouth, he whistled, and three guards came up. Four leather *nagaikas,* torn from their girdles, covered Schnarrenberg with a rain of blows. Bright blood dripped from his forehead and from his cheeks. Without a sound he staggered to our car and fell on both knees almost as soon as we had dragged him into safety from the rain of pattering blows.

"He won't risk any more talk," said Brünn sarcastically.

In Nizhni Novgorod our trip suddenly came to an end. Nobody knew why. At a spot where ancient granaries of black wood looked down upon us, we had to get out, and there we sat for hours on the hard pavement watching the buzzing life of this old commercial city. At noon twenty peasant wagons rolled up to where we sat. "For the wounded!" said the guard. "Man," muttered Brünn, "is it possible that there are really human beings in this town?"

We climbed up on to the wooden *teljägen* and made ourselves as comfortable as possible. A troop of Cossacks with clashing sabres surrounded us on all sides. "Forward, *pascholl!*" The streets were incredibly full of holes — almost tunnelled. Even though we proceeded very slowly, we were terribly battered and bruised.

We drove for an hour through the city. The streets were lined with houses carved up to the roofs, belonging to rich merchants; and curious churches stood in the squares. Variegated Oriental life passed by us. The people stood and followed

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the long procession with proud eyes. Some lowered their heads when they saw our rags; others looked at us menacingly. "As if we were driving about in a paint-box!" said Pod.

Even after two hours we had not reached our goal. A third hour passed, and still we were driving through the middle of the town. "Have we not already seen this church with the blue cupolas, Brünn?" "Either these Russians do not know their own city," he answered laughing, "or they are making use of us as exhibits, driving us a few times through the whole town in order to make the people believe in a countless number of prisoners!"

He was right. We saw some streets three or four times and only got out of the city in the evening into a small central camp like that of Ugrieschskaja, a fenced-in court with three already half-filled wooden sheds. "I'll be hanged if the whole business had any other purpose than to show the people their captives!" said Brünn. "I fear that we shall be driven through many a city before we get to our destination . . ." nodded Pod.

The same plank beds as in Ugrieschskaja were in the barracks, the floor of which was not even of wood and had been turned into slush by the rain of the past days. Those who were already there crouched opposite us, among them a small group of Germans who looked at us inquisitively, and a Hanoverian dragoon, a large and slender Cornet, who came up to us. "My name is Seydlitz. Can we help you?"

"Thank you, we only need quiet, I think. But have you been captive long? You look so fresh!"

"For three weeks. We come directly from the front."

"How do matters stand?" Schnarrenberg and I asked simultaneously. He pushed me violently to one side.

The White dragoon reported. Was it possible? Victories, always victories? In Kurland, Poland, Galicia? "We hope for peace before the winter is over," he finished.

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Schnarrenberg stretched himself. His face, covered with blood and still striped from blows, was covered for the first time with a smile. "Boys," he said brightly, "we are victorious, that is the main thing! And everything else . . ." He raised his hand and snapped his fingers contemptuously. "No, this is the principal thing . . ."

The next morning I was roused by a slight dispute. "You must have gone mad!" I heard Pod say.

I rubbed my eyes. "What's the matter, Pod?"

He pointed to a volunteer with spectacles who crouched with naked upper body on the plank bed next to him, a frail youth with the face of a girl. "This lad cannot kill lice, *Junker*. Did you ever hear of such a thing! He takes one after another out of his shirt, and sets it down carefully on the ground. . . ."

"You are a pacifist, I suppose, eh?" Brünn called across.

We all laughed loudly. "No, lad," said Pod, angered, lifting his broad paw and waving it lightly. "I advise you to put your friends out of doors — else I'll kill them on your own body!"

All lay in the meadow in the midday sun. We got a little thin soup and a bit of meat on a wooden spike. A few really got a bit of meat, but most got a bundle of muscle and skin mixed with the wood.

"Can't we buy anything here?" asked Pod gloomily.

The White dragoon, who, with a little hussar from Wandsbeck, had joined us, shook his head. "Only kvass," he said.

"Kvass?" said little Blank. "Is that something to eat?"

"No, to drink — Russian beer made of fermented black bread, I think. . . ."

"Of black bread?" shouted a Bavarian, called by his comrades the "Schwalangscher." "Holy Lord! — and this they call beer? Are these people quite forsaken of God?"

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He went away to look at the beverage more closely. Three of the men were playing cards, another cutting his toe-nails. "I saw an uhlan on a plank bed a little while ago," I said to Seydlitz. "What ails him?"

"Dysentery," said Sedylitz softly, and continued: "He is a splendid fellow, a war volunteer of forty-five years, a Doctor Sieveking from Hamburg, a lawyer. A pity about him."

"Is he so very sick?"

"He is already losing blood."

One evening Brünn sat down at my side. "*Junker,*" he said, "I should like to learn a little Russian, too. I think we shall soon go on, and then one could use it. . . ."

I did not mention books or any method of teaching — I had grown wiser. "Well," I said briefly, "what do you want to know? Have you got a piece of paper? Write it down. . . ."

"How do you say: 'I love you'?"

"*Ja was ujublju.* . . ."

He wrote it down. "Give me a kiss?" he then asked.

I told him. "I should like to sleep with you?" he continued, in a matter-of-fact voice. I told him this also, and he wrote it down carefully. "Anything else?" I asked.

"No, thank you, that is enough for me . . ." he said briefly. He then sat down apart, with wrinkled forehead, and learnt it by heart.

Eight days later our wagons again appeared in the yard, and we were ordered to get ready at once. The entire camp was being evacuated, and those who had come before us had to go too. Only some twenty or thirty who were unfit for transport stayed behind.

We stood up, but sat down again immediately on the grass. We were slowly beginning to learn what "at once" — *sitschas* — meant in Russian. "Now there will be more

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blows," I said in a tired voice. "If we were only in the cars again! I could not stand being on a lower plank bed. . . ."

"No fear, my son," said Pod. "I'll take it."

When we saw the guards coming from far off, I hobbled back with my two new comrades to the shed. Dr. Sieveking was lying on the grass in the sun, his limbs drawn up, his head on a large stone. His riding-breeches were stiff and hard from phlegm and blood, his hair white and tangled, his cheek-bones protruding, his lips dry. He wished to clasp our hands once more, but he was only able to extend his fingers a little.

"Just go on, my boys," he said with fixed eyes. "Go on, my dear boys! And do not forget Germany!"

Pod had taken the two new-comers, Seydlitz and Posek, on to our plank bed. He had realized that I should like it and had invited them. . . . "So that our *Junker* may have a couple of people with whom he can converse decently," he said roughly. "I am only a stupid rascal. . . ."

The train rolled on. Day after day went by. Pod no longer jumped eagerly off the train whenever a station came. I could only send him out to buy things once a day. "We must be saving, Pod. I have only three roubles left — how much have you?"

"Man," he said gloomily, "I haven't had a copeck for weeks. . . ."

If we could only have got money somewhere! I must keep Pod in good humour, cost what it might. It was not only to me, but to us all, as if the sun were shining in our gloomy car when he was cheery. But he was only cheery when he had eaten enough, and he needed a great deal. . . .

Of the five new-comers we had in our car, two were sick with dysentery. They had been too weak to get to an upper plank bed and now lay, feeble and dirty, in a dark corner. They no

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longer ventured to creep forth by day, but at night they lay, their backsides at the cracks of the sliding doors, for hours at a time. Although they ate hardly anything, they were constantly evacuating, and everything about them was sodden.

"Dirty mess!" cursed the Schwalangscher. "Throw them out!"

"And if it were you?" little Blank called out in excitement. "Can the poor fellows help it?"

"I guess you want a slap in your face," Pod muttered, meaning the Schwalangscher.

"I only meant to say that they ought not to have been allowed to come with us," he said, silenced.

At the stations we now often met long trains of refugees, from the Ukraine and Poland, from Lithuania and the Baltic. For months they had been living with wives and children in the cars, in which they had made themselves as comfortable as possible.

"*Junker*," said Brünn on the evening of a day we had passed in such a station, "do ask the guard whether we could get a girl to come with us."

"You are mad, I think, Brünn!"

"Why? We have collected five roubles; isn't that enough for him? It is one of the refugees, a pretty girl — young, plump, healthy! She can remain until tomorrow morning with us and then return at once . . ."

"But I don't want to ask! Find someone else."

He looked at me with wide-open eyes. "But why not?" he asked amazed.

"Because I won't have a hand in such a shameful thing. . . ."

"Listen," he said, "you may think about it as you choose — we don't want to know your reason! But if you have so little feeling of comradeship in you . . . you are young, perhaps you don't know yet what it means. . . . We old ones, how-

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ever, we married ones. . . . Do you believe that I bite my fingers till the blood comes every night for nothing? Every night, every night. . . . No, by the Lord," he broke forth, "I beg of you, we all beg of you; nobody but you can speak with him! Oh, God in heaven . . ."

"Hush, Brünn, I'll do it."

That night, just as the "turn-in" signal sounded, Brünn drew a robust, buxom girl into the car on the off side. The guard pretended to be asleep, no one spoke a word, only the gipsy whined like a dog.

The girl turned round, shivering with cold, and laughing in an embarrassed way. Brünn seized her violently and drew her by both hands to the lower plank bed which had been cleared for the purpose by the others. I heard his hard breathing, saw his spread hands moving up and down her body. "Lord in heaven!" he said every moment, "Lord in heaven. . . ."

Thirty starved men looked on stealthily, but only the gipsy crouched openly beside him. Seydlitz and Posek, Blank, Pod, and I lay on our backs looking up at the ceiling with fixed eyes. I felt a savage tenderness towards Pod the giant, Pod the bear. At the same time I was tortured by a dull suspense. Would he also . . . ?

Suddenly Brünn shouted. It was not a human sound that broke forth from him. It was the sound of an animal that for a few seconds had forgotten its captivity and had dreamed he was in golden freedom. A sound came to my ears as if from a wrestling-match. Was it necessary to wrestle with one another to obtain that which was said to be the fairest in life? Was it painful . . . ?

What were they doing? I thought horrified. I had never seen it. I had never done it either. It burned in me as if to rend me. I had to bite my lips to keep myself from looking at them openly like the gipsy. . . .

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When towards morning I turned round once, I saw the gleaming flesh of the girl. She had hardly anything on her body, nor was it any longer Brünn who knelt beside her. It was already the fourth, sixth, or eighth. . . .

Brünn lay in the open space and slept, his handsome barber's face smiling, his turned-up little moustache twitching. Little Blank was weeping, his youthful body shaking violently. Pod lay next to me bathed in perspiration. He held his fists pressed over his eyes and incessantly whispered: "Anna! Anna! . . ."

In Samara I sent Pod for the last time to make purchases. "There is only enough left now for a dozen meat *pyroschnis*, Pod," I said smiling. "The last copecks — bring what you can for them."

He came back with twice as much as he should rightfully have got. It was always the way with him. Devil knows how he managed it! Were the peasant women not able to withstand this begging bear, or did he steal?

For once we ate enough to satisfy us. The next day Brünn, with a symbolic motion, drew his leather belt tighter. "The beautiful days of Aranjuez are over now . . ." he quoted pathetically.

I no longer got out at the stations. I could not look at Pod as he stood with open mouth in front of the tables of *pyroschnis*, the upper part of his body bent a little forward, his eyes hypnotically gazing at the fat and shining brown pasties. He had already been subjected to blows once because he had not heard the signal to get in — Blank now took care of him. All of us had a feeling of misery in the pit of the stomach when we saw geese and ducks. "I can no longer stand the smell of this stuff!" said Brünn.

It fared worse with the two suffering from dysentery. They lay curled up under the plank bed, and their faces seemed to

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be covered with wrinkled parchment. They could no longer drag themselves to the sliding doors in order to evacuate, and around them was a puddle of yellow phlegm and pale blood. Their wet clothes smelt horribly, and when we stepped back from the open air into the car, we felt like vomiting till bile came.

For a third time I spoke with the guard. "Comrade," I said, "those two will die if they are not taken to a hospital! We shall all be infected. Do report it to the commander of the transport . . ."

"Die, and to the devil with you! And if you come to me again about the matter . . ." He laid his hand on the *nagaika*. Its switches were still black from Schnarrenberg's blood.

"What kind of soldiers are these?" asked Seydlitz hoarsely.

"Oh," I said, "they are not soldiers, they are transporters of the exiled, that troop of police whose sole task it is to take criminals to Siberia. They can be recognized by their uniform, green *rubaschka*, black riding-breeches, revolvers with red cord, Cossack sabres, *nagaika*."

"Then we are not prisoners of war?" was all he said. "We are only criminals, murderers, thieves, deported? Well, then I understand . . ."

One morning we heard a long-drawn moaning under our plank bed. Pod got down and drew a sick man by his feet out of the dark. He was very heavy and the other had lain half upon him. Pod took hold of him also and started back frightened. "He is already cold!" he said roughly. "Come, take hold!" The upper one in dying must have rolled over him, and he was too weak to free himself. Now he moved his eyes pleadingly and gurgled something which we did not understand.

By the time we reached the next station, the second one had also uttered his last sigh. We breathed in relief. "The Lord

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be praised!" said the Schwalangscher. "At last we shall be rid of them!" No one was angry at him this time. All were thinking the same.

When the train stopped, I hastened to the commander of the transport, a bearded N.C.O. "Two men have died of dysentery in our car. Would you please give orders for their bodies to be removed?"

"*Nitschewo!* That would mean a lot of writing. Anyway we are almost at our destination. I must deliver the full number."

I felt myself growing pale. "How . . . ? But that cannot be. . . . We shall all be infected. . . . Some of us still have open wounds . . ."

"I must deliver the full number," he called out brutally. "*Idji!* Hun! *Pascholl!*"

Nobody answered when I told them. Schnarrenberg's jaws ground violently, little Blank clapped his hands before his face, Seydlitz threw back his head proudly.

"Throw them under the plank bed," said the guard, rolling a cigarette and spitting.

Pod and Brünn drew them by their legs into the darkest corner. They glided noiselessly to the floor, leaving a broad track of mucus behind them like snails. "We must wash the floor at the next station and sprinkle it with chloride from the toilet," said Schnarrenberg, "or we shall all perish. . . ."

For four days we travelled on in their company. Gradually a biting odour began to penetrate through the cracks of the plank bed under which they were lying, and sometimes it seemed as if the cold of their bodies rose up into our limbs. We no longer spoke or sang. Often at night one or another would start up out of his dreams screaming. Pod's full face had grown pallid and hollow-cheeked in the last few days. Blank often cried himself asleep, and at such times he sought shelter on Pod's broad body as a child does on its mother's.

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Upon our arrival at the camp station the first snow was falling, thin as dust, and through its shimmering drizzle we beheld the country spreading out to the horizon in lifeless desolation. We did not yet know that this treeless steppe was one of the most miserable regions of old Russia, that it was the Orenburg sand-steppe, but we felt its desolation at the first glance. "And is it in this God-forsaken corner of the world that we are to live in retirement?" asked Brünn.

Again we had to wait for hours drawn up into two lines before the cars. All were badly frozen, but particularly we who were wounded, because we could not stamp our lame legs on the ground to warm ourselves. "Could they not, at least, have left us in the car until they were pleased to take charge of us?" Schnarrenberg snarled.

At last a couple of Cossack officers came riding up from the nearest village. We were counted off, once, twice, three times — it would not tally. "Where the devil are the two missing ones?" roared the bearded N.C.O. "In the car," we all murmured in dull chorus. "Why did they not come out with you?"

"Because they died like dogs!" Seydlitz broke out.

"Fetch them at once!"

Pod signed to the Schwalangscher. "Tie my handkerchief over my nose!" he said grimly, taking out a second rag and tying it over the Schwalangscher's mouth. Then, with tight-shut lips, they climbed into the car and dragged out the two by their boots.

"Stop, stop — where to?" shouted the N.C.O.

"Where they belong," muttered Pod, and laid them directly under the hoofs of the commandant's horse. The animal snorted violently, reared up, and backed. The second officer's horse, a white one, almost turned a somersault. The faces of the dead were bluish-black. The snow gently and swiftly covered their open eyes.

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"All here, Your Excellency," reported the N.C.O.

The commandant, a little wizened fellow with the pointed face of a mouse, touched his fur cap lightly with his hand, quite unmoved. "In fours, forward, march!" he growled from his saddle.

Silently we moved off. "This shrew-mouse is a regular skinner, if I am not mistaken," said Pod, with conviction.

We were brought for the first time since our capture into earthen barracks, horribly unhealthy, much-feared rectangular sheds dug deeply into the ground and covered with a flat roof. They were not even finished, for the walls were only partly covered with thin boards, and in many places the bare earth peeped out. At the ends were the doors, along the sides a couple of little windows, already half covered by the drifting snow; and in the centre was a long aisle leading from door to door. The remaining space was taken up by two tiers of plank beds made of pine boards.

"By thunder," said Brünn, "the veriest fox-holes, and so dark that a man can't even read his morning paper!"

We lay down together as before. Again twice as many were forced into one shed as there was actually room for. If we could only have moved about a little, could have nailed a few boards together for a table! For weeks we had been eating off the bare floor. In time our backs would become so crooked that we should no longer be able to look up at the sky. . . .

"Doesn't the stove appear to you too small for so large a space?" asked Blank anxiously. He was anæmic and always cold.

"Earthen barracks are said to be very warm," remarked Seydlitz consolingly.

The first evening Pod came in with an infantryman as thin as a rake. "This is another who is condemned to be constantly famishing," he said in his dry way. He seemed to be a

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daring fellow. A sharp, hooked nose adorned his leather-skin face, out of which there blinked a pair of black, fiery eyes. "Is there room for this man in our guild?" Pod continued. "He is a much-travelled lad, an artist and a conjurer. I thought he might be able to cheer us up a little now and then by his tricks."

When, after three days, the first wood for fuel came, large fragrant logs, Pod and the conjurer went out for booty. Pod came back with a black eye, eight logs, and a mocking smile. "Here, boys," he said, "is a pillow for each — thick and thin ones; choose as you used to do at home with mother!"

They were all smooth, wedge-shaped pieces. Up to that time I had always used my riding-boots, the soft uppers of which, when rolled round the soles, made a useful head-rest and, when laid on the wedge-shaped log, could be used as a horse-hair pillow. If we had only had covers. . . . When captured, I was fortunately wearing my long cavalry coat, and could use it as a covering, but many had nothing on their bodies except their tunics and froze terribly every night.

Schnarrenberg, the senior in rank in this shed, informed us that the commandant was looking for an interpreter in order to be able to speak with the prisoners of war. "Report for the post," urged Seydlitz, Pod, Brünn, and Blank. "Who knows who else may report and perhaps betray us for some small advantage to himself? . . . Yes, *Junker*, do so! Then our complaints will at least come to the right quarter!"

I got a guard to take me to the commandant. The Shrew-mouse sat in the staff-building smoking one *papirossi* after another. A German surgeon-major whom I had not yet seen was standing before him, a gentlemanly, erect man. I was just able to hear him say in French that something had to be done.

"*Oui, oui, certainement, sans doute. . . .*"

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For no particular reason I suspected that the commandant knew only a few words of French. He always used the same words: *Certainement, sans doute. . . .*

"It is unprecedented," continued the surgeon-major in a sharp voice.

"*Oui, oui, sans doute. . . .* Well, and you?" He turned to me, speaking in Russian.

"I want to report for interpreter. Your Excellency has made known —"

"Very good, *charascho. . . .* You are very young. Must children be sent to the front in Germany?"

Always the same silly question, I thought. "I am a war volunteer," I said for the hundredth time.

He laughed sneeringly. "Indeed? . . . Well, much pleasure . . ."

"Has Your Excellency any further commands?" I asked briefly.

"No, you can go. You are interpreter from today. Nor do I need *you* any more, doctor. Good morning. . . ."

We remained standing in front of the staff-building. "Dr. Bockhorn," said the surgeon-major, shortly. "We shall in a way work together, Ensign," he added, firmly grasping my hand; "and it will not be easy for either of us. Incredible conditions prevail in this camp, especially as regards sanitary arrangements. And nothing is done! Yes, he promised everything — *certainement, sans doute* — and he does not even understand French, this whitewashed Oriental! But what am I to do? He does not know German, I do not know Russian. . . . It will be better now!"

When I came back, all looked at me in suspense.

"Well, my son," asked Pod, "how was it in the den of the lion?"

"Yes, I have become interpreter," I said joylessly. "But you were right, Pod, the Shrew-mouse is a skinner. There is a Ger-

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man physician in the camp, a man of spirit. He will take care of us. Dr. Bockhorn is his name. . . ."

Yesterday morning the Shrew-mouse had an Austrian flogged because the famishing man had stolen a bit of meat. Four Cossacks undressed him and threw him down on the frozen ground, his hands and feet tied together with long ropes. At each end two Cossacks stood and stretched his body by means of these ropes until it was nearly torn asunder, while an N.C.O. beat his naked back with all his force with a seven-tailed *nagaika*. After the very first blows the skin over his lean spine and ribs burst. Dripping with blood, the Austrian shrieked as if he were dying. The Shrew-mouse smoked a cigarette and watched each blow. "Count out loud!" he called several times. When the Cossacks stopped after the fortieth blow, he said calmly: "Another ten and this barbarian will not shriek again. . . ."

A short time afterwards the first cold of winter set in. There was only enough wood to get the stove a little warm, and there were daily fights for places near it. Freezing hurt, but so long as all else did not fail . . . There was not even water in the camp. It had to be fetched in barrels from the river, and no one wanted to go for it in that cold. When I reported to the commandant that two water-carriers had had their hands frozen because they had no gloves, he said they should wrap their foot-rags round them.

I asked for tools so that a pit could be dug for the excrement. There was no definite place — all the prisoners sat down in the corner of the yard, since the cold weather had set in, even in front of the shed doors. "I have no tools," said the commandant, polishing his nails. I asked for large consignments of wood. When morning came, the clothes of those lying along the outer walls were frozen to the wet plank beds. "There is no wood in the whole steppe," answered the commandant,

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stretching out his legs comfortably in front of the over-heated stove. " Moreover, the stoves are in the sheds for ventilation, not for heating. Prisoners of war have to provide their own fuel! "

When I left the staff-building, a young Cossack officer followed me. He had been standing next to the commandant on our arrival, and his horse had almost turned a somersault when Pod had laid down the two dead men in front of them. He greeted me courteously and took a long look at me. " Tell me again what it is you wish," he said in a good-natured voice. " I'll see whether I can do anything for you. But don't hope for anything! I am as powerless as you. . . ."

Unusual laughter greeted me as I entered the shed. A tall sapper from the neighbouring plank bed held a paper in his hand from which he was just reading aloud. " Have you not yet noticed that I love you? " he read pathetically. " I devour you with my glances, I follow you everywhere. I caress the place where you lie. Come to me tonight. No one in my corner will say anything, each of us has a friend. . . ."

" What does this mean? " I asked Pod.

" A love-letter," he said quietly, almost shamefacedly. " The sapper found it by chance. Someone in his plank bed must have written it."

" A letter from a man to a man? " I asked stupidly.

" Yes, certainly. . . ."

" I do not understand this. . . ."

The sapper read on. " I kiss you, I worship you. . . ." At this moment somebody laughed, not genuinely, but artificially, shrilly.

" Man," called out another in vexation, " do not pretend. Did you not this very morning write one yourself to the little dragoon? To little Blank next to us? "

During the second week a German orderly came to fetch me. " You are to come to Dr. Bockhorn, please."

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Dr. Bockhorn lived with five Austrians and two young German doctors in a detached stone house. All greeted me cordially, but were surprisingly silent. "Ensign," said Dr. Bockhorn, "I have an unpleasant communication to make to you. Typhus has broken out in shed IV."

"Yes, doctor," said I vacantly.

"We must take counsel," he continued. "We have nothing, no remedies. What are we to do with empty hands? There is not even a hospital division in this camp. And there are altogether twenty-four thousand men here. There is nothing at hand, neither blankets not bandages, neither linen nor soap, neither water nor wood near at hand. It will lead to a terrible catastrophe if we cannot induce the commandant to do something. Be ready for tomorrow. In the mean while we will draw up a list of what is absolutely necessary!"

At the door of our shed I came upon Seydlitz. "What is the matter with you?" he asked. "You look so miserable!"

"Nothing, Seydlitz, really. . . ."

We crept together on to our plank bed, he helping me a little with the climbing. "If only we could get some letters sometimes!" said Brünn. "I've not heard anything from my wife for five months. . . ."

"Yes," said Pod gloomily, "no news from home, that is the worst! All may be dead long ago. If I but knew whether the harvest was good . . ."

"My boy began school at Easter," said Schnarrenberg. I had never heard him speak in so soft a voice. "I wonder how he looks, the fair-headed little lad in his gay cap. . . ."

"My sister was confirmed this year," said von Poseck, dreamily. "She is so lovely and gentle that I always felt ashamed to be near her. . . ."

"My brother was to have been an apprentice this year," said little Blank, "to the same boss that I had. He was gladly taken

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to replace me. The boss is a large dealer in groceries, bread, butter, eggs, sausage, ham . . ."

Suddenly Pod turned me round to him by the shoulders. "What's the matter with you, lad?" he asked roughly. "Does anything trouble you?"

I released myself. "Let me alone, Pod."

"No, tell me, my boy."

"Call them all," I said hoarsely, "but softly — no one is to know as yet." They crowded close to me. Sixteen eyes were looking at me, wide open, with a presentiment of something dreadful. "Typhus has broken out, comrades," I whispered.

We did not achieve anything. First we pleaded, then we stormed. Finally the Shrew-mouse threw us out. The Cossack Captain was standing next to him. His face went white when I translated what Dr. Bockhorn said, and he threw himself between the doctor and the commandant when the latter wanted to go for the doctor with his riding-whip.

In the shed frozen limbs were of daily occurrence. A few from each bed had fever. The Cossacks had to drive out the men with their *nagaikas* to make them fetch water. Outside, on the right and left of the doorways, mountains of excrement began to form. Some did not go out any more when they wanted to evacuate. The stubborn fight against vermin gradually became purposeless. Sometimes it seemed as if the lice came in multitudes out of the ground, and, in addition, our faces were disfigured and swollen by the bites of bedbugs.

"For God's sake," said Schnarrenberg one day, puzzled, "this cannot go on. What will be the result of it . . . ?"

"These lice," said Pod comfortingly, putting a fat insect with a black mark on its back on his thumb-nail, "have received the Iron Cross from the Russians for torturing us to death. Don't you see it on its back?"

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"Do you know, Pod," said I roughly, "that they are the transmitters of spotted typhus?"

His smile died away. "Is that so . . . ?" he said hoarsely. "Is that so?"

The little windows were now completely snowed up. Formerly we had been able to recognize by his legs whether a passer-by was one of us or a Russian. We had already learnt to tell our comrades by their boots and their gait. We knew when Schnarrenberg returned from an official errand and stamped by in heavy riding-boots curved a little outwards, or when the conjurer went out on a raid for booty, by a couple of stork-legs stuck like two sticks in a pair of much too wide infantry boots.

Many busied themselves for hours in guessing from this part of a human body, not only rank and nationality, but age and characteristics. They made a sort of science of it and maintained that more was visible from the boots and gait of a person than from his face. But now we could not even pass the time with this amusement.

Everything seemed gradually to perish in a gloomy twilight. "We cannot even find our lice now," said Brünn. There was only enough petroleum to burn for three hours in the evening at each end of the shed. Our faces slowly grew pale as those of prisoners in a cell, our movements heavy and uncertain. All of us had long, tangled beards, and eyes red and inflamed from the dirt. We could not cut our nails and had to bite them so as not to grow claws. "It would be a laughing matter if it were not so like a weeping one," said Brünn sometimes.

The cavalry corner of our shed, once the liveliest and cheeriest, had become disturbingly quiet. Brünn alone now and then made one of his ironical remarks, but more rarely than in our worst times at the front. Contrary to all expectation, Schnarrenberg had grown extremely depressed. Many despised him for it, but I thought I understood him. It was a period of

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transformation for him. His hard but just soldier's heart could not yet understand this meaningless suffering. He still regarded it, so to speak, as unreal and temporary. By the time that he, always accustomed to the most exact order, had realized the change and grown used to the new conditions, he would be an old man and would look upon it as a combat equal to the combats at the front or perhaps even superior to them.

Little Blank was the most downhearted of all. It grieved us to look at him, and because he had lost so much blood, he suffered most of all from the cold. "But are these not only summer barracks?" he often asked. "Surely human beings cannot be left to pass the winter here, and a Russian winter at that!"

That day twenty men died in barrack IV, all of spotted typhus.

"*Junker,*" said Pod one morning, "two Hungarians are lying at the door. They have not been on their feet since yesterday and have a strange look. Do go and see whether —" He broke off and looked at me with an expression in his eyes that made me turn away.

At a moment when I was unobserved, I stole over to them. They were two Honved hussars, clad in grey uniforms, and were, apparently, already delirious. A couple of Croats sitting next to them paid them no attention. Pod had not been mistaken. Their hands were covered with red spots, their lips scabby. They had typhus.

When I returned, Pod drew me aside. "Well?"

"Yes, Pod," I said hoarsely, "now it has come into our shed too. All our group must be told of it, so that they may take proper precautions. . . ."

Pod made the round. When Seydlitz was told, he pressed his eyes together with an inimitable movement which gave his face

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an indescribably haughty and contemptuous expression. Brünn shivered and collapsed as if from a stroke. "That is our death-sentence!" said he, more gravely than anyone would have thought possible from him.

Schnarrenberg started up. "Nonsense! Nonsense and cowardice! Keep such ideas to yourself at least, won't you?"

The tears dropped from little Blank's eyes. "I shall be the first," he said, sobbing. "I have no more power of resistance. This constant freezing has taken it all out of me. . . ."

The two Hungarians died that same evening. Lights began to flicker everywhere, like will-o'-the-wisps on poisonous marshes. We suddenly got more food. It was not that we received more, but that many refused the soup because they could no longer eat. That was less of an advantage to us than it appeared to be, for the soup was so thin that we could drink it by the pailful without deriving any strength from it, and we did not take more than we absolutely needed; for it gave us a tormenting thirst which we had no water to assuage. And in our situation hunger was less felt than thirst.

The feverish no longer left the shed to relieve nature. The sandy ground began to soften from the urine, and heaps of excrement collected under the plank beds. Schnarrenberg had the excrement cleared away by detachments of the healthier men. Schnarrenberg was certainly slowly finding himself again. It had become clear to him that here, in the rear of the war, one could also fight. He had necessarily to learn the new kind of fighting, and that could not be done in a day. It was such as a German could have no conception of. A soldier found it much more difficult to obey here than at the front, and Schnarrenberg's orders were only obeyed when Pod and the conjurer drove the men to the work by means of a log of wood. The first day Pod was obliged to knock down an Austrian in order to have Schnarrenberg's command carried out. His

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conjurer was invaluable, a ju-jutsu champion who overcame every resistance with a lightning-like mysterious grip.

Our cavalry corner supported the superior in command by setting the best example. Von Seydlitz, with haughty face, and often out of his turn, cleared away the piles of excrement in our vicinity as if it was an ennobling labour. No one from the neighbouring plank beds appreciated this, nor did anyone appreciate Schnarrenberg, who, because he was in command, was daily in danger of his life, so much so that he could no longer pass through the shed without a body-guard, or he might have been strangled. Yet his energetic orders certainly saved the lives of many of us, though it seemed as if all had lost hope and would have preferred to put their hands over their eyes and suffocate in the dirt.

Dr. Bockhorn informed me that the typhus had already spread to all the sheds. Sixty died daily. It would be Christmas in a few days.

Pod had made a good find in the conjurer, who was handy in everything and always willing. He took garments away from the dead in order to provide us with good clothes, and none of us objected. "Are they the less warm for that?" said Brünn. We did not freeze so badly, and that was the main thing. We scarcely recognized each other, however, for we sat on the beds shapelessly muffled up in two or three tunics. We wore, chiefly, Austrian uniforms over our old ones. They were rather thin, but, worn in twos or even threes, gave us warmth. At times the conjurer showed us a few of his tricks, and though we could no longer laugh at them, we all liked to see them.

The only one who would not accept any of this weird clothing was little Blank, who needed it most. "No," he shouted, when the conjurer urged him to have a cloak, and shrank back as if he thought it would burn him. "No, Hatschek, I'd rather freeze. . . ."

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Last night was Christmas Eve; what more can be said? Nothing but the words that Dr. Bockhorn had spoken that evening: "A human being who is not capable of sacrificing himself for an idea, no matter of what kind, is not yet a human being in the higher sense of the word, has not yet exceeded the animal. . . . We are doing here that which makes the real human being — suffering for an idea. . . ."

One morning the first of the doctors died, the younger of the two Germans, the one with the scarred face. The day before, he had broken down at the side of a sick man and had not regained consciousness. Dr. Bockhorn raged. "Are we in a madhouse?" he roared. "Are we in hell?" During the past week he had aged ten years.

In front of the sheds the corpses began to accumulate in great heaps. We were not even given a barn to put them in, and the ground was frozen too hard to permit of their being buried, even if there had been anyone strong enough to dig the graves. They were simply thrown out on to the heaps of excrement, where fat rats gnawed at them.

Little Blank entreated us not to make him go out any more. He had found an old tin can somewhere. "Pardon me," he said, like a child, "but I cannot go out of doors. I should die of disgust. The dead are lying about everywhere and staring at me. . . ."

In our barracks we had forty dead up to that time, and we had been able to take them all out. Pod was still strong and kind. In those days, towards the end of January, one hundred persons died daily in the whole camp.

On the preceding day as many had died in our shed as in the whole camp a fortnight before. Matters went rapidly downhill with us. The doors were scarcely opened even to throw out the dead. Once Pod had to lead a detachment to free the doors. It had not been possible to get out or in on account of the piles

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of dead. When he came back from this expedition, he looked so different that I scarcely recognized him. "*Junker,*" said he, in a new, strange voice, "I liked being a soldier and did not shirk when my country called me. But I went in the belief that I was a soldier and should be treated like a soldier — not like a convict. This here is . . . is. . . . And if they should get me again some time without having cared that such a thing could happen once more — "

"Don't weaken, Pod," said I, in a low tone. "We serve our country here just as at the front! It is only another sort of combat, harder perhaps and more enervating, but . . ."

He swung his arms about. "Yes," he shouted, "but . . ."

"Be calm, Pod," I begged, "and be just. Do you believe that the Russian prisoners of war have such treatment with us, too? "

"The Russians are not to blame for our sufferings," Brünn interposed. His voice sounded cutting and full of hatred. "His head is not all right! " I thought, startled.

"Who else? " I asked quietly.

"The war! " he shouted. "The war! " he repeated, yelling hysterically, beside himself. "The war. . . ."

Next morning someone shook me awake. Before me stood the German assistant doctor, a young medical student. He looked alarmed, and his eyes burned out of black sockets. "Get up," said he; "we must go to the commandant again. Two Austrian doctors died last night."

I walked beside him through the dark shed. Sometimes we had to step over strangely distorted bodies that lay in the aisle. They were men attacked by fever who had fallen from the uppermost plank beds.

"How can you stand this? " he asked weakly. "We at least have our quiet room — are alone at least a few hours every night without having to hear shrieks, without having to see dying men. But you . . ."

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"We do not hear or see it any more," I said. "We have grown callous."

"Yes, there is no other explanation; nevertheless . . ."

"How is the surgeon-major?" I asked quickly.

"Still well. . . . But who knows . . . ? With it all he is consuming himself inwardly. Spotted typhus is not necessary. It can be avoided. Light, food, cleanliness, make it impossible. That's the worst of it; it is not necessary. Only slovenliness, only laziness, only indifference. . . . I fear today's interview. . . . He is no longer master of himself."

In the doctor's house Dr. Bockhorn and an Austrian doctor were awaiting us. He greeted me shortly. "Good morning, Ensign. I need not tell you anything, eh? 'Either — or' is the word today!"

The Cossack Captain was sitting in the ante-room. In the name of the doctors I begged him to take us to the commandant. He made a helpless gesture and looked discouragingly from one to the other. "Captain, we entreat you for our last fifteen thousand men!" I said. He bit his lips and went in. There was evidently a violent dispute. "You must, commandant," I heard the Captain say. "It is in the regulations." At last he came out, much agitated. "Please . . ."

We stood in a half-circle before the commandant. A huge army revolver was lying in readiness on the desk. It was not there the last time, I thought to myself.

Dr. Bockhorn spoke. I translated. "We request that you put more water at our disposal. We cannot even moisten the lips of the feverish. We beg for military blankets, or at least some straw. All the sick are bedsore from the hard boards, and the danger of contagion is, accordingly, enormous. We beg for wood for the stoves. Besides dysentery and typhus, thirty per cent of the men have inflammation of the lungs and frozen limbs."

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"I cannot work magic," replied the Shrew-mouse.

Dr. Bockhorn began to shout. I hesitated a little. Then I translated: "No prisoners' camp for twenty-five thousand men can be arranged without providing the most needful things."

"Do you mean to lay down the law for me, an Imperial officer?" the Shrew-mouse growled.

"Do you know how many die every day now? One hundred and fifty!" Dr. Bockhorn raved.

"At the front still more die," the Shrew-mouse said sarcastically.

Dr. Bockhorn looked as if he wanted to fly at his throat. "We must at least have an empty barn for our dead," he panted. "Is that asking too much? At the front they at least bury the dead. Here they are left to the rats. In a short time we shall have the plague." At this the Shrew-mouse started convulsively.

"Bury them if you can."

"Give us tools. Or shall we dig with our finger-nails?"

"I cannot work magic. . . ."

Dr. Bockhorn staggered. "Very well," said he, "very well. Now tell him the last, Ensign: We need a vacant space for an isolation hospital. Next to the doctor's house there are empty stone barracks guarded by sentries. We want these barracks. If they are not given to us, they will be taken. You may kill us for it, but we shall be grateful. We entreat for a last time, but then . . . but then . . ."

"What was the man saying just now?" interposed the Shrew-mouse suspiciously.

"That the exasperation of the survivors will drive them to the uttermost, and that the fifteen thousand will slay your five hundred Cossacks at one onslaught if you will not —"

"You mean to threaten me?" he shrieked.

"Only to inform you," I said coldly.

"Out with you!" he shouted, and gripped his revolver.

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"And the hospital?" roared Dr. Bockhorn.

"Out with you!"

"And the hospital?" I repeated, foaming.

For a second time the Cossack Captain intervened. "I beg of you to go!" he cried entreatingly. "It is folly . . . I dare not permit . . ."

"See to it that the least possible number of these Huns ever see their homes again!" the Shrew-mouse yelled at him in a commanding voice.

The Austrian doctor burst into convulsive weeping. Dr. Bockhorn looked like an insane man. "Everything lost!" he murmured, "everything lost. . . ."

I was sitting next to Seydlitz on the plank bed. Opposite to me the long-legged sapper was writhing about, his face and hands spotted. "Accursed dogs," he murmured, "accursed dogs. . . ."

"I have been railing at my fate," said Seydlitz slowly. "I used to think to myself: 'Why am I alone condemned to this lazy inaction while my comrades must fight anew for their lives every day?'" He looked round him and made a comprehensive gesture with his hand. "Now I am reconciled to it. . . ."

Did he speak the truth? I thought, or did he only say it to give me some firm hold in this chaos, to make us all see some meaning in it and help us to endure what seemed to be meaningless?

"We shall not be ashamed when we do return home," he continued. "We shall have no crosses on our breasts, no, not that . . . but it will be seen by our eyes that we did not flinch . . . and perhaps someone will whisper that he was in Totzkoje; for even if we are not at the front, we are none the less here for Germany; and even if it was another kind of combat, still it was a combat for our country, like the other. . . ."

We were silent for a long time. Suddenly he began to speak

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of Germany, and his hard, somewhat croaking voice became strangely soft — as if he were speaking of a distant beloved, so it seemed to me — as if a lover wished to tell the first one he met of his great happiness and longing. It went to my heart.

"Germany is a meadow in flower," he said in conclusion. "Germany is a clean, soft, white bed. Germany is limpid water. . . ."

"Lad," said Hatschek, the conjurer, "do put on a cloak! We have all been wearing them for weeks and nothing ails us."

"Nothing as yet . . ." whispered little Blank.

"Oh, nonsense! And as for the rest, do you believe that that will save you? Have we not all of us got lice? Are we not all of us sore? There, you see. . . . No, that is kismet, lad, fate; as one says in German: 'Who is to get it will get it though he lay in a room apart.'"

"Hatschek is right, Blank," I said, coming to his aid. "You are freezing for nothing. Each louse may bring it, and you have hundreds on you — like all of us."

"But I must be doubly careful," he said obstinately. "I am the weakest of us all."

In a sudden attack of tenderness I stroked his head. His boyish tuft of hair was matted and the colour of ashes. Alas! I should not have done so; for, with this consoling action, tears streamed from his eyes.

"*Junker*," he asked softly, "have they forgotten us?"

"Who, my lad?"

"Those at home, I mean. Is not Germany a powerful, great empire? How can it be that we are subjected to this? We have done nothing evil; we have only fought for our country, honestly and decently, like the others for their countries. Why are we kept in dungeons? Why are we treated like convicts? No, I cannot explain it otherwise. They have forgotten us. . . ."

"They must defend the frontier to the last man," I said, as

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to a child. "Perhaps they believe, too, that we are well off. . . ."

"Yes," he said, "yes, certainly. . . . But someone might nevertheless think of us. We have fathers and mothers and brothers . . . is there no one there to remind them of us, to say for once: 'Do not forget the prisoners of war'?"

"Someone will come in time, my lad, only it is a long time. We are far away, and no news penetrates to them. . . ."

"Yes," he said passionately, "if we were only permitted to write! Oh, I should tell them about it. . . . 'If we were animals, we should long since have perished,' I should write to them, 'but we are human beings. . . .' There is nothing, no possibility. . . . Perhaps they think: 'Oh, our prisoners of war are well off; we need not be anxious about them. For them the war is over. . . .'"

He was right. To receive no news, not to be able to give news! Have we conquered? Have we lost? To know nothing, to hear nothing! That was the worst!

Daily there was more room in the sheds. The incessant struggle for the plank beds had changed its aim. Nobody now wanted the upper places, for fear of not being able to climb up if he should get the fever, since whoever was not able to do so and had no lower bed had to lie in the wet aisle on excrement and urine.

Dirty icicles hung from the ceiling. The fever-ridden eagerly followed their growth and thrust them, as soon as they were large enough to be broken off, between their crusted lips to cool them. The German doctor came every morning, but his only task was to say who were dead. What else was there for him to do? He did not even need to touch them, so practised had he become. "*Ex*," he said after a glance, "*ex, ex, ex.* . . ."

Pod and the conjurer, and often Seydlitz as well, accompanied him on this round. Those designated by "*Ex*" were at once piled up in a heap so as to get them out later. No attention

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was paid now to their names or nationalities. Up till now their identity disks had been taken away from them, but that could be done no longer.

Were we actually still alive? Or were all of us already dead? Had we been dwelling for years in this den? Or only since yesterday? Blank was right. If we had been animals we had long since perished. But we were human beings . . . and it is harder to kill a soul than a body. . . .

How much longer was it to last, my God? Two hundred were now dying every day. . . .

I had tried for the last time. I had gone to the Cossack Captain. Had he not human eyes? I went to him in secret.

On the pretence that I had to speak to him officially, a sentry took me into his dwelling. When he saw me, he jumped up from the soft on which he was lying with opened *litewka.* "Has something happened?" he asked in alarm.

"No," I said, "not yet, but no one knows how long this can go on — there is latent madness in us all. All know that they have to die — in such a position one shrinks from nothing. What could make it worse? Nothing. . . . It could only shorten our pains. . . ."

"What can I do?" he asked in a low tone.

"Everything! Could we not at least get more water? Our men can no longer fetch it, they are too exhausted. But you have soldiers, five hundred men with nothing to do. Or at least a few blankets? Or straw? Even the straw from your horses, which you throw away to rot? Samara is a large town and is not far from here. . . . A little soap, just for the doctors — a little underwear; our shirts are rotting on our bodies. . . ."

"Oh, please understand me," he exclaimed. "I am a junior officer. I cannot give such an order, and if I had enough compassion left to die of it, I could not change matters. . . ."

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"You must do something, even ever so little," I almost implored him. "We must see that there is at least one human being in this land. Show him to us. Fifteen thousand men will curse Russia if they do not see him, see him soon, see him tomorrow!"

Throwing himself on a chair, he laid his head on the table. "Do you believe that I can ever be at peace again in this life? No, I have had to see too much shame. . . . Oh, not only here. . . . I have been wounded twice, but I would have reported again long ago for the front if I did not know that here then —"

"Yes, please, yes, remain here," I cried. "Promise me that you will —"

"I shall remain and shall try to soften matters. But that signifies nothing," he groaned, "only little drops. . . ."

"Listen," I interposed, "is there no way by which to give us at least the barracks as an isolation hospital? Could you not, could you not some day forget to post sentries there?"

He rose. "And what then?" he asked in a smothered voice. . . .

"Then we will move in, and when we are once in . . . he will not dare to drive us out again."

"Very well. . . ."

"And another thing. Come over to us once! I vouch for you. No harm will come to you. Hitherto you have only heard how it looks in our shed. You must see it — see it. . . ."

"I shall come. But now you must go away. No one must know that I spoke to you in secret. I should be degraded and sent to Siberia if he were to discover that I . . ."

He pressed both my hands. "Here, take this . . ." giving me a box of cigarettes. "Now go . . . I shall do everything, by God . . ." How warm and clean his hand was! How kind and comforting his voice sounded! . . .

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Brünn was crouching on a vacant plank bed. His hair was matted, his moustache drooped, his eyes were uneasy. He held a large louse between his finger-tips.

"To think that such a beast should carry death in itself, eh?" he said in a voice that almost sobbed with agitation. "So small and insignificant — one could hardly believe it. . . ."

His eyes were staring and almost looked as if hypnotized by the bright grey dot which was violently trying to free itself from his nails. "Want to bite me, eh? Want to inoculate me? Or have you already done so? . . ." Suddenly he crushed it, threw it on the plank bed, and trampled like mad on it with both feet. "You beast!" he shrieked. "You beast! Do you want to murder me? Do you want to murder us all? . . ."

That day the Cossack Captain visited our shed. Pod was the first to see him. "A Russian officer is standing at the door and wants to speak with you," he said.

"He wants to inspect our shed, Pod," I said hurriedly. "But he must not be hurt! Take along the conjurer. . . . Schnarrenberg, you come too."

The four of us went to the door and received him. "I thank you," I said in a low tone. He raised his hand to his cap. "Please be quick," he exclaimed with difficulty. His face was quite green, and he looked as if he was about to vomit. Did it come from the terrible stench in our den? We did not notice it any more. We hardly went out of doors and knew nothing else.

In the first cross-passage twelve men were lying one upon the other. We were waiting for the arrival of the doctor to carry them out. Slime was dropping down from the second block of plank beds, where four men, sick with dysentery, were lying. We had been waiting eight days for their death, but they were tough. The ground was strewn with half-frozen urine puddles and trampled human excrement.

"Kill him, the Russian beast!" yelled a voice from the rear passage. It was the Schwalangscher's voice.

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A Styrian was on his knees singing a monotonous psalm like a dirge. A Bosnian, his parchment face turned towards Mecca, rose and sank on his plank bed in rhythmic prayer. A man sick with abdominal typhus, who in his fever had rolled down from his plank bed, was trying in vain to get up on it again. Pod assisted him up as we passed.

We arrived at our corner. "Here is our lodging, Captain!" He remained standing for a moment, pressing his handkerchief over his mouth. Seydlitz saluted in military fashion without moving a muscle of his face. Blank got up, tired. Brünn did not move, only looked askance into his eyes, pale with hatred. "Accursed dogs! Accursed dogs!" groaned the sapper next to him.

When we got back to the first cross-passage, half a dozen cries suddenly rose up. "Don't let him out alive, the beast!" shrieked an Austrian voice. "Keep him as hostage!" a German said. A Hungarian hussar came running out of the cross-passage, madness in his eyes. The leg of a plank bed, forcibly torn away, hung from his fist. Before he could reach us, the conjurer tripped him up with a lightning-like movement of his foot and hurled him under the plank beds.

"Silence!" cried Pod in his deep voice. We opened the door. The Captain took the handkerchief from his mouth and looked at us in turn. There were tears in his eyes. Were they from the biting air, or from inward emotion? He shook hands with each of us as if he wanted to say something but could not. Then he turned round and went rapidly away.

"He is weeping now, if I am not mistaken," said Pod slowly.

Yesterday von Poseck complained of headache and attacks of giddiness. At noon he would not take any soup. "You must eat, Poseck," said Seydlitz quietly, taking a bit of meat out of the dish and revolving it enticingly, like a top on its wooden spike. "It is a good piece — proper meat!"

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"I cannot, Hans, don't be angry. . . ." Within an hour he had a fit of vomiting, and shortly afterwards his whole body was seized with a violent chill. The lines round Seydlitz's mouth grew a shade deeper. He took off his Austrian cloak and covered his friend with it. Poseck shivered violently all over, and his teeth chattered so that they could be heard at a distance. "What do you think, Ensign?" asked Seydlitz in a subdued voice.

It was the usual thing — what could one say? I knew that he had found Poseck on the first day, and that they had suffered everything side by side. "Perhaps it is only an attack of fever," I said, but I could not look into his eyes the while.

Brünn was fading away with incredible rapidity, although not actually ill. I suspected that in his despair he committed onanism several times every night. He frequently sat with crossed legs on an empty plank bed and talked to himself.

"There is nothing up here," he said yesterday. "Thunder! In the field there were always fine posts. When the air was thick there, Brünn could always manage to get an order for the rear lines. . . . There is no such thing here, there are no rear lines. . . . Here everyone has his turn! Cursed! Not even covering is here . . . and throwing oneself down is no good either. . . . No, here one cannot fritter oneself away, there are no such posts here. . . ."

"Why do you write everything down, Ensign?" Schnarrenberg asked me.

I looked up from my note-book, a thick writing-pad, which I had fortunately rescued when captured. "In order that for once mankind may learn what was possible in the twentieth century! And be able to avoid it in future wars!" I said severely.

"Then you also believe that there always will be, must be, wars?"

"No, I do not believe that. But I fear that in the next hun-

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dred years, from one day to another, so to speak, we shall not have progressed far enough to have any other kind of solution for our disputes. . . ."

"At the front I never thought much of such diaries," said Schnarrenberg after a while. "What good are they? Good ones are as rare as white ravens — most of them consist of either trimmed-up heroic deeds or private intimacies that interest no one. During the fight itself no one can write anything — no one has time for it — and afterwards everything looks different. . . . Have you, for example, ever observed how a man fell? I never had time for it — he just fell — done. It is like this with everything that happens in war. Afterwards everything looks different. . . . Here it is not the same," he continued. "Here one has enough time, one can photograph each single incident in all quietness, describe every trifle exactly to a hair in perfect leisure. Here life does not fly, here it creeps . . . here descriptions become genuine — after days one can still compare whether one has been exact, even to the dot over the 'i.' . . .

"It is gradually beginning to seem to me like incessant firing, Ensign," he said in conclusion. "We waited for the attack as a relief . . . but here it is still worse. Here this relief, this freedom from suspense, never comes. . . ."

Pod suddenly broke down. He, too, was not actually ill, but he could no longer take hold of the dead, which was easy to understand. The conjurer could not do it by himself, and Seydlitz did not stir from Poseck's side. So we were as they had been in the other barracks for over a week. The dead were no longer carried out, but, beyond the mental effect, that could have no consequences. Only the conjurer had strength enough to pull them down into the aisles, and there they froze in a few hours. Sometimes a dying man crept into the corner of an upper plank bed, but he was soon betrayed by the odour of decomposition; and he could also be pulled down. I saw

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prisoners sitting on dead comrades, or making use of the dying to lean against as supports for their backs. A great number of those dead of typhus lay half naked, some with their feet covered only with foot-rags. Only those dead of dysentery lay in all their clothes, which could not be used, because they were completely saturated with mucus. At night we survivors crept under mountains of uniforms taken from the dead to warm ourselves and wrapped ourselves closely in them on all sides to protect ourselves from the rats, though since there were so many dead in the shed, the rats did not molest us living ones.

Two hundred and fifty died daily. . . .

Then, one day, little Blank became prostrated too. He was immediately attacked by high fever and cried constantly for water. Pod, who had remained kind to the living, went out frequently to get snow for him. It was, to be sure, soiled from the excrement all around, but, nevertheless, less dangerous than the dirty icicles that hung from the beams of the roof, and in which the expectorations of the consumptive and the evaporation of those down with dysentery had crystallized. We had placed Poseck and Blank together so as to nurse them together. Poseck was strangely quiet, Blank greatly excited. "You can give me a cloak now," he said to the conjurer. "It's all the same now; yes, give me two, three, as many as you have. I have frozen long enough. . . ."

"Ensign," he said once, "are not the Scriptures the cornerstone of all religions? But how does it say in the Scriptures — 'Love your enemies'? I cannot make it out. . . . Is there, perhaps, a Russian God and a German one?"

I pressed a foot-rag filled with snow on his burning forehead. "No, my boy," I said. "There is only one God."

In the evening his mind began to wander. "Another pound of coffee for the lady, Franz," he cried busily. "Guatemala, special quality! Certainly, madam. . . ."

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It was night. I had taken the petroleum lamp from the door and set it on the bed next to me. A few who were afraid of the dark hurled curses after me, but no one had the strength to prevent me from doing it. My book lay on my knees. A copying-ink pencil was in my hand, which was wrapped round with some kind of rag.

I thought of my native country. I no longer had any hope of seeing it again, but my book, at least, should reach it. There would be many diaries about the war — may the Lord forfend that there should be a more heart-rending one, another document like this! My book would suffice for a millennium. . . .

I had always tried to be cool and matter of fact, to let nothing of my moods and opinions get into it, to describe only what I saw. If I did not carefully conceal what was in me, if I allowed some of it to flow into its pages, nobody would be able to read or understand it! It would be nothing but a single inarticulate shriek. . . . With what kind of letters could I write this down?

I no longer had hopes of getting out. Therefore I wrote that paragraph and added to it: *J'accuse* — I accuse! But I did not accuse for myself, no, not even for my fourteen thousand comrades who had perished under my eyes in these dens — I accused for the sake of the shame and disgrace to humanity, which comes from God, as the priests say. The disgrace was not to us — our sufferings were too small for that; the disgrace was to one above us — God!

Perhaps there must be wars, but one so near death as I knew only that this disgrace that follows upon it, this monstrous horror, need not be. That I knew. Was it not worse now than two thousand years ago? If we had been made slaves, as was the custom in those times, we should have fared better, and fourteen thousand, perhaps a hundred thousand in all Russia, would not have had to perish like dogs in their own dirt. No

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man will allow himself to be offended unpunished — so ye believe: does God? And this sin done to His creatures, those made in His image, is against God.

I was tired. I could not go out. At that moment the sapper on the next bed grew silent. He stopped so quickly in his monotonous cursing, which had lasted for days, that I was struck by it. I raised the lamp a little and saw his face. He was dead. He looked like all the others. His individuality was blotted out. He was no longer the sapper from Harburg, Meier or Müller by name; he was now only one dead of spotted typhus, number 14,324 in this winter, nothing more.

I placed the lamp next to me again and crept under my tunics. From the next plank bed a young Viennese was constantly calling out: "Mother, mother, now all is over . . ."

Schnarrenberg had become our chief support. Since life had been at stake, he was up to the mark like no one else. I never heard a sound of complaint from his lips. He was a coarser edition of Seydlitz, so to speak, the type of common soldier as opposed to that of officer. Both were soldiers to the very marrow.

He had only one weak spot, the war, the great war, which all had agreed to call the world war, which was the cause of our sufferings, but of which, nevertheless, we did not speak much. Schnarrenberg alone lived on in it. Was it, perhaps, for this reason that he was bearing all this more easily?

"If one but knew how matters are at the front?" was his eternal question. But we heard nothing, no mail was sent to us, no sign of life reached us from the outer world, probably through fear of the scandal that our reports would arouse in the world. We were to disappear without anyone's learning in what a cruel and inhuman manner . . .

"Shut up with your war!" cried Poseck in one of his lucid moments. He was mostly unconscious. "If the world has not

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yet advanced enough to settle conflicts or differences in a sensible and peaceful way — this world with all its technical and scientific progress — it can go to the devil for me! "

We were all surprised at this outbreak. Schnarrenberg wanted to retort, but I drew him away. " Do leave him in peace, for God's sake," I said hastily. " Do you not see . . . ? "

That day the sentries were not posted in front of the empty barracks. I ran at once to Dr. Bockhorn. " We must move into the barracks at once, doctor! " Bockhorn nodded absently. " Now he has come to his senses, the barbarian! " he said dully. " Now, when it is almost too late! " I did not enlighten him.

In the afternoon I went over. The entire place was occupied. The men lay, side by side, on the stone floor, without covering, without straw. Bockhorn ordered empty plank beds to be broken up so that the sick might at least lie on boards. The German assistant doctor and two Austrian doctors were all that remained. They worked from morning till night. It almost made one shriek to look at them.

All those who could creep came full of hope into this hospital, for the tidings of its opening had flown through the shed. What were the doctors to do with them? They divided them into groups of the slightly less ill, such as had still some days to live, and then the severely ill ones, such as would die in a few hours. But there were healthy ones also. These only had dysentery, inflammation of the kidneys, tuberculosis, or abdominal typhus. In short, those who had not spotted typhus or black smallpox were called healthy. Could anything else be done when everything was overfull?

Towards evening an Austrian doctor collapsed. " We cannot go on! " cried the German assistant doctor. Dr. Bockhorn was leaning exhausted against the door. " Is it not madness? " he asked in a hollow voice. " Now they are giving us an

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isolation hospital for four hundred sick, at a time when three hundred are dying daily."

I was lying on my heap of rags. Why could I not weep? Perhaps it would have done me good. . . . Someone tugged at my arm. "Poseck is dying, Ensign, come," said Pod. Leaning on Pod, I got up and went to Poseck, who was terribly spotted. He stretched out his thickly crusted tongue, thirstily moving it violently to and fro. Seydlitz was dropping bits of snow on it. The dying man was looking into his eyes with the expression of a faithful, grateful dog. Sometimes he moved his fingers as if he wished to give us his hand.

"My little sister has silvery hair," he suddenly whispered. Pod shoved his fist into his mouth and bit on it. Seydlitz passed one bit of snow after another over Poseck's lips. His fingers were trembling a little, but his face was unmoved. Little Blank, who was lying next to him, had raised himself a little. He looked at Poseck with terrified eyes and wept from weakness, like a child. Suddenly Poseck's tongue was still. Seydlitz, putting the snow aside, pushed the tongue into the cavity of the mouth and pressed the jaws together from above and below. "*Finis* . . ." he said slowly, and, pushing by us, went out.

I crept back to my pile of rags. Something was working in me. I slapped my right leg, now wholly healed. "Had I but given thee up!" I groaned. "Perhaps I should now be at home — and even if I were dead — would it not be better than here . . . ?"

In the afternoon we carried von Poseck out. Seydlitz had wet his hair with melted snow and combed it neatly — we could not give our comrade better preparation for his last rest. We had drawn off the handsome brown riding-boots while he was still warm. The conjurer, who was handy at everything and at that time the most vigorous of us all, had helped us. But it was a bad bit of work; for Poseck had not

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had them off his feet for months. Pod and I could not look on. But Seydlitz was quite right. If he had taken them to the grave in the spring, they would have cut them off when they buried him.

"Well, are you ready?" asked Seydlitz softly. He took hold of the shoulders, Hatschek of the legs. Poseck, once so plump, was terribly thin. Schnarrenberg and I walked on the right and left, each of us holding a hand to keep it from dragging along the ground. Pod and Brünn walked behind, while little Blank looked at us with wide-open eyes.

An icy east wind was blowing outside. We walked as quickly as possible, but it cut as with knives, and we no longer had warmth or blood in us. There was only a little snow on the steppe, and at every few paces the shape of a dead man showed beneath it. We stumbled over arms and legs as hard as wood, which, on being knocked against, emitted a ringing sound.

A distant mound seemed to be free of dead. Seydlitz nodded his head in that direction. "Here," he said turning round until Poseck's face looked towards the west. Slowly we let him down. Seydlitz laid the dead man's hands on his breast. We wanted to fold them, but they would no longer keep together. We remained standing for a while in front of him with lowered heads. His young face looked terribly changed and like that of an extremely aged man. A few weeks ago he was still young and fresh, I thought amazed. Would they soon bring me here too? So stiff, so yellow, so aged . . . ?

Suddenly Seydlitz saluted, soldierlike. We all stood erect, our hands to our caps, and did not stir. "Now come . . ." said Seydlitz, taking down his hand. The wind bit us to the very bones. "Forty degrees minus," muttered Brünn. Pod already had white spots on his cheeks. We ran at full speed back to our barracks.

"If we could but conquer!" said Schnarrenberg.

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"We shall conquer!" said Seydlitz. His high-bred face resembled that of a racehorse showing his front teeth. With one movement of his hand he took all in: Poseck out there in the snow above us, Blank in high fever next to us, the plank beds under us, the dead before us. "Can this have been in vain?" he added.

"Why did they bring us just here?" Pod asked helplessly. "In all this enormous country, the greatest on earth, was there no other place?"

"We were to perish here!" said Brünn cuttingly. "In this war the fight does not end at the front. In this war they stop at nothing. They dare not kill us outright, so we must starve and perish. No one will ever find it out. Does anyone know where we are? No, to this day. . . . Would Germany stay away? But before we can give any news, we shall all be dead, and the dead are mute. . . ."

"We must go on living," said Seydlitz, "if only to bear witness some day. Only the living can testify. The dead are modest. . . ."

"But to be able to hold out we must know how it goes with our Fatherland," said Schnarrenberg.

"It goes well," said I quickly, almost fearfully. "It certainly goes well, comrades, else would these here torment us so . . . ?"

No, there should not be any doubt of it, for the Lord's sake, I thought in fear; for then . . . oh, he is right; what we are suffering here can be endured for an idea alone. It is too great ever to be repaid with material things. . . .

I had found a bit of wrapping-paper and taken out my copying-ink pencil to draw something, anything. Was it skulls? Was it Poseck's aged face? Little Blank at my side was moaning incessantly. I watched over him. We relieved each other every hour. All the others were asleep. I drew, drew . . and suddenly I wrote:

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Deutches Heimat, Deine Lande
nur noch einmal frei der Bande
mit versehntem Aug zu grüssen
und auf wandermüden Füssen
Deine Erde zu betreten,
ist mein Beten. . . .

I read it. Who wrote this? Since when had I been able to write poetry? I read it for a second time, amazed, questioningly. Yes, it was a poem. I looked about me, disturbed. Dying men, dead rats. . . . I began to write again:

Nur noch einmal Deine Felder,
Deine dunkeldichten Wälder,
wo auf grünen kiefernzweigen
spriessend helle Kerzen steigen:
Deine Wälder zu betreten,
ist mein Beten.

It flowed from me as if someone were whispering it into my ears, and as if these were not the first verses in my life, as if I had already written a hundred poems. How was this possible? I looked round again. Groans and effluvia, stench and dirt. . . . I continued to write:

Nur noch einmal Deine Heiden,
Deine Blumenhügelweiden,
die in roten Lichtern glänzen,
buntgeschmückt von Blütenkränzen:
Deine Heiden zu betreten,
ist mein Beten.

Little Blank groaned hoarsely. "Water, water!" I took some snow, pressed it on his lips, and changed the foot-rag on

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his forehead. A man with fever crept up to me on his knees to get some of our snow. I gave him two handfuls, and, stammering some foreign word of thanks, he crept back. I took up my pencil for the last time:

Deutsche Heimat, Deine Erden
nur noch einmal vor dem Sterben
mit dem durstgen Mund zu küssen,
nur in letzten Scheidegrüssen
Deine Gräber zu betreten
ist mein Beten. . . .

No, it is all up. I shall never be a poet; my first poem would also be my last. Our mortality had risen to three hundred and fifty. Three hundred and fifty per day. . . . I had seen Dr. Bockhorn weep.

I could not write any more. I had grown too weak and the horror around me too terrible. At times I thought of the dainty nurse. "Come what may," she had said. But of what use was that? We were living in an inferno. No, we were not living any more; we were still waiting — for what? For death? A madman's imagination could not picture more horror than was to be seen in our den. And in our abused souls . . .

Two walls of dead were already lying in front of the barrack doors. We had, as it were, to walk through a tunnel of corpses when we wanted to go out. Between some of our plank beds the soup still stood, cold, frozen. The orderlies had brought it in and put it down among the sick men, more they could not do. It seemed as if everything was about to become extinct. No human voice was heard, only sounds as of animals groaning and gurgling, or here and there a whining, praying, and horrible cursing. Some had black, frozen limbs, and the stench from their wounds mingled with the odour from the corpses. Rats everywhere, rats all over. . . .

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One morning two Austrians went mad, one from thirst, and one from horror. They crept about among the dead, howling, and playing with the rats as if they were little dogs. The day before, a German infantryman had gone mad. If he had not been so weak, he would have strangled us survivors in his frenzy, one after the other. We could only sleep when one of us kept watch. How fortunate we were to have the conjurer with us!

I now knew why the poem had burst from me. It was the last word I had to say for all — to our country! Germany! Germany! Thou art our last thought. . . . For thee we have suffered, for thee we have died. Do not forget it! No, we shall not see thee again. All is over, all, all, is over. I staggered as if I were drunk, but I had to stay awake until my time was over. "Water, water," moaned Pod, the powerful giant, the brown bear. The day before, it had been only Blank, now it was Pod too. No, I must not sleep. But why not? Was it not all the same? Should I not be carried out on the morrow also?

Since the previous day I had been beset by an insane fear. Whence did it come? Was it my turn now? Did I feel it? Perhaps I had already got the bite that would in a few days put me at Poseck's side? I was speaking to my mother. Of late I had often been speaking to my mother. "Had I to die in your country, mother?" I asked shrilly. "No, be content, father; I have done my duty, though I was only a prisoner, and though at times I may have appeared downhearted and discouraged, I never forgot that here also I served my country, like you. . . ."

The perspiration broke from my forehead. My eyes pierced through the dim vapour as if they saw someone coming. I had such a strange feeling. . . . Had I fever already? My pulse flew madly. Cursed, cursed. Would this hell never give us up again?

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I should have loved for once in my life to embrace a girl. Once. . . . Now it was too late. Over, over, everything over. Death devours. I heard his jaws grinding. Is he insatiable? Does he want me also?

Help. . . .

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1917

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I HAD written nothing for a long time; for I had lain for weeks with spotted typhus. Seydlitz and Schnarrenberg pulled me through. Pod, Brünn, and little Blank were among the living also. Only Schmidt I, quiet, modest little Schmidt I, who had never obtruded himself, was dead. Oh, many would have got well if they had had comrades such as mine.

When for the first time I awoke with a clear head, an old, broken-down man was standing beside me. "The epidemic is subsiding, Ensign," he said. "It has vented its fury. We have now only forty dead daily. If they have the will to hold out, they will get well. . . ."

It was Dr. Bockhorn who spoke. He and an Austrian were the only surviving physicians. But was it possible that the epidemic was really subsiding? It was as if God himself had taken pity on us, when man had a heart of stone.

Eight of us were lying in the vacant house next to Dr. Bockhorn's room. How had we been allowed there? I wondered.

We had straw under us, and three or four cloaks over us. Seydlitz, Schnarrenberg, and the conjurer were nursing us. We got strengthening food. Where from? I again wondered. "A Russian officer sends it daily," said Seydlitz briefly.

"I have succeeded," said Dr. Bockhorn one day, "in having two hundred convalescents transported in a fortnight to a better climate. Do you eight want to go with them? Here you can never get quite well again; at least, not mentally."

"Yes," we all cried in unison. "Yes, yes, yes!"

After a fortnight we all managed to walk a little. Pod was the strongest of us, Blank and Brünn were the weakest. We met in the yard of the house. The snow had almost disappeared and the faint sun heralded an early spring. Cossacks were at work everywhere picking up the dead. They threw them,

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twenty in a bunch, on to broad wagons, put a rope over them, and drove away. "They have begun to fear the plague and cholera," said Brünn.

At noon Dr. Bockhorn arrived with convoys from the town. "There, children," he said, "now get in." We laid our cloaks under us and sat down back to back. "You are not coming with us, doctor?" I asked.

"No, I must stay. I should like to go, believe me. . . . But scarcely anyone has been left. Farewell, comrades," he called out suddenly.

The wagons started. We all had tears in our eyes. "We thank you, thank you," eight rough voices cried. He did not stir. "By thunder," muttered Pod, "there's a man for you. . . ."

Even though we drove slowly and carefully across the yard of the camp, we could not altogether avoid the dead bodies. Seydlitz looked fixedly to the left where was a certain mound. We distinctly saw Poseck, his hands still on his chest, but his feet naked, for the wind had loosened and carried away the wrappings.

At the railway embankment stood eleven cattle-cars with small stoves. The N.C.O.s ordered twenty men to each car. Climbing up, we all got upper plank beds, at least for the day. The straw that was lying on the boards had already served for horses, but what did that matter? "How is this possible?" asked Brünn, amazed. "Has the Shrew-mouse suddenly been turned into a human being?"

We soon found out. Shortly before our departure an officer rode up to us on a white horse. "Interpreter," called the *starschi* on guard. I climbed down again. The officer had dismounted. The Cossack Captain was standing, very pale, before me. "The commandant has been ill for two weeks of spotted typhus," said he softly. "I have been acting commandant of the camp. Have you any other wishes?"

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"No," I said hoarsely. To think that one had to be tongue-tied at such a moment!

"There is wood for burning in the front car; and," he added, almost as if ashamed, "here, take this please . . . for you and your seven comrades from the doctors' house."

As he gave me his hand, he slipped something into my pocket. I tried to say something, something very grateful, appreciative. . . .

"All ready, Your Excellency!" the *starschi* reported.

I got in. Totzkoje stayed behind. Faster and faster we rolled away from it — from it and its seventeen thousand deaths. We all gazed out as one den after another disappeared and sandy steppes followed on right and left. . . .

"The Captain looked after us as long as we were in sight," said Pod, in a low tone. "He was holding his hand to his cap, if I am not mistaken. . . ."

At Samara, the nearest town of any size, our cars remained standing on a side-track. Had they forgotten us? We did not stir. The commander of the transport had his home in Samara, disappeared into the town every evening, and did not return until noon the next day. Perhaps this just suited him. Perhaps he was even the cause of it. It was so difficult to get to the bottom of things in this country. . . . However, we were quite satisfied with the stop. It was very comfortable in the *tjeplushkis* when they were heated and padded with straw. "Absolute mansions," said Brünn once; "one could almost await peace here!"

Samara, the city where we left the cars for the first time, was never to be forgotten. Stands loaded with tempting things were everywhere. "If we had but one tiny rouble," said Pod plaintively, "in a week we should be on our legs again. . . ."

I kept to one side and, unobserved, bought eight pieces of soap, a small mirror, and a large bowl. Taking the mirror, I went behind the car and looked at myself again for the

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first time in half a year. In the name of God, was that I? A convict, a tramp, a burglar? No, no, that was not I! "Though you were not such — now you are!" said a voice. "Thy child-face is gone, thy freshness is gone. Thou hast become a severe, haggard man. Six months have wrought what would ordinarily have taken a lifetime."

I distributed the soap and gave the bowl to the conjurer. "There, Hatschek," I said, "now go and fetch plenty of water."

"Man," cried Pod, "did you have some money left?"

"Yes," I said, "a little . . ."

He turned the soap disdainfully round in his black fingers. "I should have liked something to eat better," he growled contemptuously.

The conjurer came back and we all washed. For seven months our bodies had not known water. My God, what that meant! It was not washing, but rather the peeling off of a white hide in large strips and crusts which loosened the layers of dirt from face and hands. Gradually, from eight terribly neglected individuals, covered with crusted dirt, there came to light eight pale men; and oh, the freshness of it! . . . It invigorated us like good food, it made the world worth loving again. "By thunder," spluttered Pod into his bowl, "I should not have believed it. By the Lord, it is as if I had for once eaten my fill again!"

Yes, it was actually as if our greatest weakness had been washed away with this water, and with it the greatest part of what still clung to us of oppressive memories. Our skin, to be sure, was like rank potato shoots in dark cellars, and at first we were almost frightened of one another, but, with the help of God, we should soon become human again.

"There, Pod, and now we will go shopping," said I at last. "You come along too, Blank, we shall not be able to carry everything alone."

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"Are you crazy?" asked Pod, without moving.

"How so?" I asked innocently.

"Don't make a fool of me," he said, offended.

I drew a fifty-rouble note out of my pocket. "Now will you come along?"

"Man," he said, "where?"

"From the Cossack Captain."

He became lost in thought. "Man," said he at last, "in this country one never knows what to think. One is the Devil in person, another an angel . . ."

After long bargaining we bought eight heavy, crisply roasted fowls, two large loaves of bread, and a packet of tea. The "Totzkoje cavalry corner," as we were now called, became riotous when we entered.

"Lord bless me, this is invalid's fare," cried Brünn enthusiastically. The fowls were still warm and dripping with fat. No one spoke. We devoured. . . . We smacked and crunched, we gulped and dripped. Must we not smack like beasts of prey to get delicious meat down our throats again after seven months? "There will now be two holidays in my life," said Pod dreamily. "My wedding-day — and this."

I took out my cigarettes. No, verily no, our happiness had no end that day. Who else but us knew what a cigarette meant?

To our surprise the sentries were respectful and friendly to us, although they were not green-coated police for the deported, but Cossacks from the Shrew-mouse's regiment. The Captain must have impressed this behaviour on them at our departure, and I was now convinced of what I had suspected in the first weeks of my captivity, that these people were really good at heart. Yes, they were good at heart, and only bad when incited or ordered to be so by superiors. Example is everything. . . . Under the Shrew-mouse these soldiers were Asiatics and brutes; under the Captain they were transformed into kind, harmless persons. Once when we were speaking of this among

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ourselves, Brünn very correctly remarked: "Like master, like man." So it is, and because they were still a young people, they needed example more than anything else. But though they were still so young, they were still strong in their love and hate.

Again all nations were represented in our car, Hungarians, Viennese, Tyroleans, Bavarians, Württembergers, north Germans. Since Totzkoje, the Schwalangscher had kept close to our corner and, even though unasked, was of some assistance to us. Since his comrade and brother-in-arms had died in Totzkoje, he had sat alone in the car, but now he had found another compatriot, with whom, to our amusement, he could converse in the broad Bavarian dialect. This was a small, droll fellow, a stableman and, like himself, more broad than tall. On the very first day Brünn had given him the name of "Tadpole," a nickname which among soldiers indicated love rather than hatred, and which had to be deserved before it was conferred.

Those were lovely days at the railway station in Samara. We all smiled, we were all gradually looking on the world again with human eyes. Only at times did someone look as if life were still unreal to him, as if he feared that this beautiful dream would suddenly fade away again.

The evenings were our best time, though we had only a little, rather smoky stove, with a pipe leading through a hole in the roof for chimney, and warm only for those near it — but what did that matter? It was, and remained, a stove, and it was still very cold outside.

Hatschek was stoker. A few talked, but most of us looked mutely into the fire and dreamed. Seydlitz sat silent; Blank smiled to himself; Schnarrenberg brooded; Brünn joked a little; Pod thought of his farm. . . .

"Now, children, let us go to bed," he said every evening paternally.

The Schwalangscher was standing lost in thought before the

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stand of a shop where everything on earth was to be had. He was trying, in vain, to explain something to an old peasant woman by stretching out his fist to her and tapping it several times with his right forefinger. Then he put his left fist to his nose, groaned voluptuously, and sneezed violently.

"*Nje ponimaj*," she said, puzzled.

Pod came up. "What do you want to say to her?" he asked, patronizingly.

"I should like some snuff," said the Schwalangscher. "Honduras, Brazil, we say at home. . . ."

Pod reflected for a while, and then, as if suddenly enlightened, drew his paper out of his pocket, his famous dictionary. "We shall have it in a minute," said he, proudly. "Just a moment . . ."

He looked and looked. His pride vanished. His bearded face lengthened. "It is not there; oh, damn," he said shamefacedly, and crept away.

When, after nearly three weeks, an officer of higher rank found us, he cursed our *starschi* like a madman and threatened him with purgatory and shooting. We suspected evil — and it came. On the next day we were packed into five cars and on the same evening coupled to a train going east. My protests were of no use.

"To the devil with it," said Brünn, but we did not take it much to heart. The past three weeks had been a veritable heaven and had strengthened us so much that we had become reconciled to life again and full of confidence. The old life in the cars went on, with its round of purchasing, eating, sleeping. The country was free of snow; spring would soon begin. Pod looked out of the window for hours at a time.

"Now they are beginning to sow at home," he would say; or: "I wonder if Anna is changing the fields correctly."

New trains of fugitive women and children stood at the railway stations. Brünn, who was about a great deal, would some-

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times come back humming, " Therefore, my lassie, do not weep, don't be so sad, wipe off your tears with sand-paper. . . ."

" Where is he all the time? " I asked Pod, who only smiled. " Have you not noticed that he is all right again? Then, too, spring is coming, and thirdly — he scents spring chickens."

In Ufa, the Tartar city, I succeeded in an unwatched moment in buying a Russian newspaper. I hastened back to the car. " Children, I have made a catch."

We sat down close together and I read out in a low voice. Of course, only the victories were spoken of in the paper, but those victories had all been gained at cities and rivers that lay far behind the places we remembered from the last front reports. Undoubtedly since the autumn our troops had captured entire provinces.

The renewed crowding together and the journey towards the East were forgotten. " Did I not say so? " remarked Seydlitz proudly, shoving out his front teeth.

" Now Russia will soon be whipped, you will see," cried Schnarrenberg ecstatically. " Just this spring offensive, and our troops will be in Petersburg! "

I, too, was jubilant at first, but suddenly I grew silent. " Did not Napoleon get into Moscow? " ran through my head. " And . . . and . . . ? " But I remained silent.

" It is easy for Schnarrenberg to talk," said Brünn on the following day. " He is a soldier by profession, war is his calling, and it is all the same to him whether he is here or at the front — he would just be a soldier, nothing else. . . . I, however, am an electrician, Pod is a farmer, and little Blank is a herring-packer. . . . No, we have nothing to do with it; this matter does not concern us. Let them break their heads themselves if they are not content. . . . But they ought to let us go home, to our wives and children and our vocations. . . ."

" You are always thinking of your little self," I interposed. " From here we cannot see how matters are going."

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"What does it concern us how matters go?" interposed a volunteer opposite. He stepped to our plank bed, and continued: "And whether it is actually want of space, or competition, or the devil knows what that is the cause of this war, if at the very start all the milliards which are now exploded in powder had been used to settle these disagreements, it would have been the same in the end — only there would have been no dead. And if we should lose, what shall we have then? We should have to live on just the same, without all this money and with the dead. . . ."

I was silent. Ought I to have spoken? Of ideals and history? Of how the fate of an individual signified nothing when the fate of a people was in question? No. Whoever puts self higher than the whole cannot be convinced even by the best words; for he who has the ideal has it, and he who has it not will never attain to it. . . .

The trip through the Urals seemed short to us. Though it lasted three days, it was not tedious for a single moment. With every curve came wonderful views of towering heights and plunging abysses. Often we had a feeling of speeding past valleys which no human foot had ever trodden. For hours at a time the train wound through walls of rocks so near that we could have touched their reddish mass if we had but stretched our hands out of the window.

During the night before Tscheljabinsk Pod woke me. "Some want to flee, *Junker*," he said softly. "Do you hear?"

I listened. There was whispering under our plank bed, agitated breathing, cording of bundles. "It is madness, Pod," I whispered back. "Shall I not advise them against it? They might as well go to the next policeman and allow themselves to be re-arrested. Without knowledge of the language, with only three loaves of bread and fifty copecks, they want to cross half the world."

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"You would not succeed in convincing them," said Pod. "Whoever has got this fixed in his mind. . . . But perhaps we are going on to a new Totzkoje. No, just let them travel. If you were to keep them from it, then for the rest of your life you would be condemned to hear how they would have been home long ago if you had not at that time — "

The train panted slowly up a steep ascent. That was what they were waiting for. The door slid back with a creak. Almost without a sound the first one, a German infantryman, jumped out into the steaming snow. Three followed, a Saxon and two from Berlin. "Shut the door again, Pod," I said in excitement. Pod closed it carefully. "The guard is sleeping the sleep of the just," said he. "Tomorrow he will beat us half to death for it. . . ."

I did not fall asleep again. "They are free now," thought I. "Free. . . . In the wilds of the Urals it will not be easy to find them. . . . And even if so . . ." Perhaps two or three weeks of freedom were worth anything that might follow.

Next morning there was great screaming. The sentry cursed, the commander of the transport raged. I explained to him many times that we had been asleep, that we had heard nothing. And surely we were permitted to sleep, were we not? He understood. Every other transport would have flogged us with the knout until we succumbed. They did nothing.

I dreamed more and more frequently of girls. They were always undressed, and the sight of them excited me to enfeeblement. Chiefly I lay in bath-houses, hidden under the benches, or on the edge of a people's bath, concealed behind bushes. At first I was ashamed of these dreams, despising myself for my unbridled imagination, but I soon recognized that they were only reminiscences of the Moskva that tortured me, that they did not spring from a smirched spirit, but were detached impressions from my subconsciousness.

With increasing vigour this greatest torment of all captivities

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became more and more torturing, and I often bit into my hands with desire and impotence and wished for the night as if it would bring the most beautiful thing in life. . . . Gradually I began to understand something that had hitherto been incomprehensible to me. I understood the gipsy in our car, I understood Brünn. . . . There was only one thing that could make us forget our misery for a few seconds, and it was this. Dreams were still helping me . . . still! But if one day these dreams should not suffice . . . ?

No, I would resist, I would not squander myself. I would not darken this first glow for all time with a gloomy memory. "Who will be my first girl?" I often thought. I feared for myself when thinking of that hour; for I had an insatiable hunger for tenderness in me. . . . But perhaps I should not be able to bear even the slightest tenderness because I could no longer understand it . . . for in the years when I might have taken and given it, I had only seen savagery. At the time when others had snatched their first kisses, my lips were bloody from horror; at the time when others had possessed their first girls, I had to comfort the dying.

After the Urals, Siberia's infinity began. In those spring days it looked much more friendly than we had imagined it. We speeded by whole forests of rhododendrons, passed whole fields of gleaming tulips, snowy narcissus, and rose-coloured cloves. At times the wind carried heavy fragrance into the car, at times our eyes were fixed upon moist spots of large edelweiss and bizarre-looking orchids. . . . "And this is Siberia?" asked Pod. "And there is edelweiss here?" asked the Schwalangscher.

"Yes, in the spring, and for six weeks," said Seydlitz calmly.

Not far from Omsk I saw Krepost, Dostoievski's place of banishment, and I suddenly remembered some passages from the *Memories of the House of the Dead.* Had it not moved me more

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than any other book in my life? Had it not been with me at night in heavy dreams, horrible nightmares? Had I not thought that no man of our time could live for a month in such a hell?

We had borne it for six months, I thought to myself. And if it had only been Dostoievski's house of death, none of us would have wept. . . . What was Krepost compared to Totzkoje? I thought back, allowing a few days from the *Memoirs* to glide before my eyes and a few hours of the dens of Totzkoje. . . . No, God in heaven, be calm! It would have appeared a paradise to us, to us of Totzkoje.

Three weeks passed in the old way. Rattatam, rattatam. . . . Did they want to take us to the end of the world? Fields, steppes, forests, steppes, Omsk, Nikolaevsk, Taiga, Achinsk, Krasnoyarsk, Kansk — all passed by. Mighty rivers, boundless deserts. "Children," Brünn called out in astonishment, "does this country never come to an end?"

At last we halted at Irkutsk. "Prepare to march!" We were surprised in spite of all our waiting. So it was here we were to live? A gay bustle prevailed at the railway station. Soldiers knelt with their mothers in front of sacred pictures and sacrificed large candles for their weal and woe. Young women in flowered cotton skirts and short fur coats accompanied them to the train and kissed them, weeping, for the last time. "There are still enough men," said Schnarrenberg. "One could hardly believe it after such losses. . . ."

The prison camp lay outside the city. We were so invigorated by rest and food that we made the march on foot without any difficulty. A half-empty stone barrack was assigned to us. Here were only Germans, so that we were separated from the Austrians for the first time. Opposite to us was a plank bed with "intellectuals" — one-year volunteers, teachers, bank-clerks, merchants, and a professor. We recognized them without introduction by their courteous way of talking to one another. I learnt that there was an officers' camp near by. It was good

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there, much better than here. . . . Should I go over there? I hesitated a moment. . . . "No," I said. "Here I have comrades, friends, tested in dark hours. There everything would be new to me. . . ." And should I find such faithful souls there? Civilization did not always mean worth. I did not want to start from the beginning again. What I had, I had. . . .

By order of the German camp-commandant, Schnarrenberg was appointed commandant of the barracks here. His first order was that all rats were to be destroyed. It was necessary; for not even in Totzkoje had so many of these disgusting little beasts run over our feet as in this camp. Schnarrenberg's organization for the destruction of the rats was model and was based on the fact that there was plenty of water. There were innumerable holes between the stones in the ground. At half of these he posted men with heavy clubs, at the other half men with pails of water. "In with it," came the order, and with gurgling and spluttering the flood descended from pail after pail. "Attention!" he called. There was splashing and squeaking, scampering and running. Angry, pointed, naked heads started up through the holes as one, ten, twenty, fifty shot out through the passage. A hail of blows beat down upon them. Hundreds already lay dead on the battle-field. . . . "Water, water, water all the time!" It drove the last ones dripping out of the passages, and their disgusting bodies accumulated on the wet ground. For my part, I could not deal out blows this time. . . . Their curly tails were so loathsome to me since Totzkoje that I would not hit one.

That same evening we were sitting, freed from the pests and in good humour, on our plank beds. "Yes, I am used to this," said the conjurer, near whom had been the greatest heap. "In circus and show-booths rats are our daily companions. Such a great battle-day, therefore, is a pleasure for one of us. . . ."

I had to laugh as I looked at him. He never seemed properly dressed in his uniform. I always thought that he ought to wear

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a turban and wide, baggy trousers or some other fantastic garment. "Do tell us something of your life, Hatschek," I said.

"Of my life? Oh," he laughed, "there is no ending when once I am set loose. . . . I have worked in the whole world, with Sarrasani, Hagenbeck, Busch, Renz. . . . Often at fairs, too, of course. . . . At the last I had a bad year. For a time I worked with Madam Glindfa, the unrivalled sensation of the world. There was a good program besides, first-class street advertising, extra parades. Nevertheless there was not much profit. . . . From her I went to a twelve-yard business, to Professor Jackson's world-famous dog theatre, a nine-foot caravan. . . . For a time I was introducer and clown, principally because I could evoke such storms of laughter. When they called upon me to enlist, I was just doing well again. I had joined a first-class troop of acrobats where I did my trick with a serpent lady. Lord, I could have done great things with that! We intended to get married afterwards, but first we had to — well, you know what I mean. . . . All vigour for our work was the word with us, and after work, pleasure. Well, deuce take it, the Prussians came, and all was over for us. . . ."

Looking gloomily in front of him, he was silent for a while and then suddenly put his hand in his tunic and drew out a little parcel that was carefully wrapped round with thick paper. He undid it slowly, put it to his hooked nose, and breathed in deeply. "It is one of her handkerchiefs," he said dreamingly. "There is something of the odour of her skin in it. . . . Do you want to smell?" He passed it round carefully. Eight coarse hands cautiously stroked the cracking cambric, eight noses sniffed longingly for a fragrance that had long since vanished. . . .

The commandant of this camp, who seemed humane, acknowledged our greetings in military fashion when he rode through. That meant a good deal; for most of the Russian officers just tipped their caps with a gesture that was more an

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expression of their contempt and their consciousness of their superiority than an acknowledgment of a salute. It required an effort to salute again and again those men who had not yet understood what it meant to be an officer and to observe the obligations attached to the wearing of a uniform, but we should have been severely punished if we had not done so. Here, as elsewhere, the bearing of the commandant inspired respect and confidence in the soldiers. I saw sentries smile at me and they even exchanged words with me as I passed. Abuse and ill-treatment were very rare.

Our guards were mostly old peasants with the waving beards of saints and light-blue, childlike eyes, who felt the war to be a misfortune, because they had never been taught to regard it as an act of punishment towards the Germanic barbarians, the disturbers of the world peace. One soon knew who could read the papers and who could not. The former declared that the Huns had caused the whole war, the latter that they were as little to blame for it as they themselves were.

Although we did not believe that this commandant put half of our food money into his pocket, as was the custom in this country, we could not understand why the food was so bad in a country where roasted chickens could be got for half a mark. "Why does Germany not look into it?" asked Brünn in a tone of hate. "Do you believe that they are told how much we actually get?" I said. "What was originally allowed for us would probably have been quite enough, but no one in Germany realizes that a part of it is left behind in at least six or eight places?"

We spoke of food more and more frequently, and here the Tadpole, like Podbielsky, went into action again. For hours they talked of pastries, noodles, dumplings, pancakes, or smoked meat. . . .

"That's nothing," said Brünn; "I could make big dumplings for you in the Königsberg manner. You take," he continued

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hastily, "pork and beef, the former from the leg, the latter from the rump, hash it in a machine, together with anchovies or herrings, mix it with bread-crumbs, salt, pepper, and stewed onions . . ." He talked unceasingly until Pod gave the plank bed a resounding blow. "If you are not quiet soon," he cried in vexation, "I shall make hash of you yourself, you confounded tormenter!"

One day I heard that the officers in the neighbouring camp fared worse than we. They had had no pay for two months, and when, at the beginning of the third month, a receipt for the amount due was handed to them, they were told that if they signed that, they would get seventy-five per cent of it. They refused and got nothing for the third month. But what was to be done? They must have food, so at last they agreed; but because they had hesitated for a few days, they only got fifty per cent of what was due.

A shrewd little rifleman from the neighbouring plank bed went every day for a few hours as servant to the Russian officers and, when he came back, always told to the smallest detail what he had seen. All were lost in reverent admiration to think that there was still such manner of living on earth.

"And they eat at a table, covered with a white table-cloth, eh?" queried a bank-clerk.

"Of course," said the rifleman.

"And afterwards do they sit in arm-chairs and smoke thick cigars, eh?" further questioned a teacher.

"Of course," continued the rifleman, "and one with a bracelet at that. And there is coffee . . ."

"Coffee, proper, real coffee?" three or four called out.

"Certainly, in cups. They are small to be sure . . ."

"Aha," said the bank-clerk, "black-coffee cups, I know them . . . of the finest porcelain, eh?"

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"Yes," boasted the rifleman, "they are so thin that I scarcely dare touch them. Besides, I always get dizzy from the smell. . . ."

All were lost in dreams. . . .

This rifleman, or the "Bed-bug," as he was called, often brought back food. Did the Russian servants give it to him or did he steal it? . . . He gobbled it all up himself, however much it was, but as his weakened stomach was not accustomed to the rich stuff, he soon threw it up again. Every evening showed the same picture. He gulped like a wolf and spat out like a heron.

I often saw our Pod looking with moist eyes at the thrown-up remnants and heard him murmur: "Did you ever see such a stingy dog . . . ?"

"Listen," I said to him one day, "can't you try to buy me a piece of soap and a tooth-brush?"

"Yes," said the Bed-bug, "but they are very dear."

Though I gave him plenty of money, it was not enough. His were veritable drug-store prices. "Yes, the war, you know . . ." he said regretfully. "The prices are rising. . . ." He was a charming rogue, but the chief thing was that I had soap and a tooth-brush and no longer had to rub my teeth daily for half an hour with my bare finger.

Day by day we saw more of those friendships that had begun in the first days at Totzkoje, but had been suppressed by increasing enervation. In the quiet and warmth of this camp they seemed to grow like mushrooms.

It was no longer particularly strange to see captives walking arm in arm, and they were already beginning to sit on one another's laps. At night I often heard words and songs from the neighbouring plank bed, curiously like those that I had heard once in the railway wagon, on that night when the fugitive girl was with us.

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Some couples passed the whole night out of doors. "My God," said Brünn, laughing; "let those who can, do it. It is warm now and dark out there — as at home." The day before, two strong men had been fighting over a young infantryman, who looked like a spoiled girl as he watched them with gleaming eyes. "Do you see him?" said Seydlitz, contemptuously. "Has he not already become a perfect woman? A primeval woman who is glad and proud when two men fight to gain possession of her?"

Brünn did not belong to those types. Nevertheless, he grew limper week by week. "You ought not to do it, Brünn," I said at one time, "or at least not so frequently. . . . It may not harm if one is well fed and vigorous, but in our condition . . ." He laughed mockingly. "No sermon, please . . ." he said limply. "I know all about it. . . . Aha! Self-pollution we called it at home, a fine name and not inapt . . . but, devil take it, what does that concern me? Did I come here myself? They ought not to bring us here if they want us to remain human beings. And if they themselves were here, those high and mighty gentlemen — I'll go to hell if they would not do it too."

One day the cesspits were emptied and sprinkled with chloride of lime, the barracks aired, the yards swept. There was great spring cleaning in the kitchen, and the commandants of the barracks were ordered to see that every part was clean. A couple of Russian physicians went through every division, removed each man that looked ill, and, to our surprise, put them, without any examination, into the hospital where not even the most sick had been admitted before.

"Potemkin, the immortal one, is haunting," said Seydlitz, mockingly.

At noon a number of Russian generals appeared in the camp, and, with them, a young, very blonde lady in the garb of a

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nurse. "That is Elsa Brändström, the Swedish nurse," somebody called out.

"Do you see?" said Seydlitz.

She went through the whole camp and inspected all the barracks. We stood up in military fashion in front of our plank beds. The blonde nurse, in a resolute manner, put questions here and there and wrote down everything. The generals pushed forward, but she took her time. "No hurry, gentlemen, one thing after another. . . ."

As she passed our cavalry corner, Seydlitz stepped forward. "I beg to report that the cleanliness is only twelve hours old, nurse," he said calmly. "And that nine-tenths of the sick in the hospital have only been there since this morning — until then, in spite of numerous appeals, no one was received there. They will probably appear here again tomorrow," he added.

Our hearts were beating in our throats. She looked at him a long time with her strong, blue eyes. "I thank you," she said, gave him her hand, wrote for a while, and slowly passed on.

We should all have liked to speak to her, only two words. Was there not something of home about her . . . ? But we knew that not all the ten thousand could speak to her, and which of us wanted it most? No, what Seydlitz had said was for everyone. . . .

"Things will be better now, you will see," was Schnarrenberg's first word. "She comes regularly into the camps now and has all Siberia under her supervision."

"Yes, if Potemkin did not come from this country . . ." said Pod deliberately.

After this episode our commandant went on furlough. Was it Elsa Brändström's doing? For she believed she had done some good by coming and had not dreamed what the effect would be. In his stead came a Captain of the same sort as the Shrewmouse, and what Seydlitz had foretold came to pass. The sick

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came back, and the kitchen soon swam in its own dirt. Instead of the meat to which we were entitled, we again got heads and hoofs and genitals, and no more chloride of lime was given out for the cesspits.

Almost automatically the guards became harsh, rude, full of hatred; in spite of which, or probably just because of it, two of the men in our barracks committed trifling errors, such as incorrect saluting. And there then happened what, up to that time, we had not believed possible.

"Form ranks for running the gauntlet," was the command. We all knew the real reason: that no one had betrayed the man who had spoken with Elsa Brändström. . . .

The three hundred of us fell into line. Fifty Cossacks stood in two rows with long-tailed *nagaikas* in their fists, the commandant on horseback in front, and a N.C.O. at every twenty paces. In the background were two squads of our guards with loaded arms and belted cartridge-pouches.

"Backs bare!"

Two or three Cossacks tore the tunics from Schnarrenberg and Seydlitz, the leading men, to show us how it should be done. We did it silently. What else could we do? Three hundred civilized men stood with bare backs in the spring sunshine, as they might have done a hundred years ago.

"Ready now — start!"

When the first ones were led in front, Schnarrenberg and Seydlitz started to run, erect and with fixed eyes. I followed them with Pod and Brünn. Resounding blows rained down, shafts of fire burned into our lean backs. I could not run quickly because of my leg, and I was distinctly conscious of the smell of leather and the evaporating sweat of the Cossacks. Indistinctly I heard their savage cries, their guttural screaming; and my ears hummed as once when I was almost drowned. As I could only hobble along slowly, I got more blows than the artist, for instance, who sped through the lane like a greyhound.

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I saw the skin break on Pod's back, just in front of me. I must not tumble, I thought, and I resolved with all my might not to break down. A dull anger rose up within me. If I could only walk slowly, step by step, with proud head and stiff neck, through this butchers' lane, just to spite them all. But those were cheap thoughts, only meant to keep me steady. In reality. . . . Lash came upon lash, like blows from the sharp paws of a tiger-cat . . . like burning knife-cuts. . . . I raised my head. Seydlitz was already through. Straight and erect he stood in front of Schnarrenberg, his large front teeth thrust forward a little, and his face looking as if in this hour he had been ennobled a second time.

We sat silent on our plank beds without our tunics, because their pressure hurt us. Our shirts stuck to our backs and were here and there striped blackish-red. Little Blank had not properly recovered from the fever he had got in Totzkoje, and now this. . . . Of our cavalry corner no one spoke. Schnarrenberg's jaws were grinding, his bushy moustache was quivering, and the folds on his low forehead were deep as furrows. Seydlitz was calmly smoking a cigarette.

"Yes, their punishments are a particular feature," said the one-year volunteer from the neighbouring plank bed. "I once got fifty *nagaika* lashes on my naked back in the presence of the commandant because I had not saluted him properly. . . . I lay in hospital for four weeks!"

"I once got six days' imprisonment when they simply forgot to bring me food or drink," another related. "If the hole had not been so damp that the water was constantly dripping from its walls, so that I could moisten my tongue from the drips, I should have died of thirst. . . ."

"I was once locked up merely through a misunderstanding," said a third. "I sat for three months in a den of rats — *katorga*, they call it — and when I got out and asked the reason for it,

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neither person nor paper could explain the cause of my punishment, in which I had almost died. . . ."

"Are we, then, completely without redress?" murmured Schnarrenberg.

"And all that only a week after our camp had been inspected by the representative of a neutral power?" Seydlitz added.

I felt that he who had said nothing would least of all forget those blows, perhaps because he had said nothing.

The next day the conjurer unexpectedly came up to me. "Ensign," he said in a low voice, as if he felt he had to confess to me, "I always hated the army, had to hate it, shall continue to hate it . . . for my life . . . you will understand that without being told. But if at Totzkoje we had not had Schnarrenberg with us . . . and Seydlitz when the blonde sister came . . . and yesterday again — did you see it? Our weak ones only held out because they saw both of them standing as firmly and as unfeelingly as in battle."

A short time before, Schnarrenberg had daily ordered the commandants of the various divisions to see to cleanliness and order. "If we do not do it ourselves, nobody will," he said to them. "We know now that the Russians want us to perish, don't we?"

Among others things he ordered every man to take enough exercise, to wash once, to evacuate only at certain places, to be careful of his uniform, and to try to behave decently. "It is my opinion that we must appear as fresh and erect as possible." He concluded his order with the words: "And if not for our sakes, then for the sake of the country for which we suffer."

He was thereupon informed by the commandant that on one occasion a Russian general who had visited some barracks when the men were taking their exercise had been so enraged by the disgusting sight that he had promptly forbidden all exercise in that camp for all time.

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I met a compatriot from Schleswig-Holstein who had come from the island of Nargin in Murmansk, a desolate rocky island in the Caspian Sea, called in German Schlangeninsel — Snake Island. "There was no fresh water there," he said, "except what was brought from the land, and when it was stormy, we were often left for a week without drink. . . . Of three thousand men, over two thousand died in six months. . . . In the end we lived on snakes, which we devoured whole, skin and hair and all. Otherwise we should have starved."

On the plank bed of the volunteer they were talking of the war. Opinions varied, but none were really in favour of it any longer. One of them very rightly said, however: "When once it is know that a man is obliged to sell, he never gets the true price for his wares, and it is the same with the war. A nation that has reached the point of wishing for peace at any price will be overcome by a less powerful nation, and a country that is known never to have defended itself will easily be attacked. It is the strong land, not the weak one, which can dictate terms of peace."

"Yes," said the professor, "that is true, but the truth is not always justice. . . . In my opinion, man is only an animal as long as he uses war as a means of settling disputes. Savages fight when they quarrel, and when a man of culture fights or commits murder, he is despised as savage and uncultured and is punished. Should that which is forbidden to individuals be allowed to nations?"

"You confuse what is to be achieved with what really is," said Seydlitz calmly.

I met Pod at the latrine. He was sitting with gloomy face on one of those seats placed at sitting height round a gigantic pit. They were merely narrow boards, which after a time cut into our thighs and were neither comfortable nor safe.

"I have been sitting here since morning," said Pod gloomily,

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" and nothing comes but clear water." " It is much the same with me," said I. " One never gets away in less than an hour. . . ."

" Ought we not to report for work, *Junker?* " asked Pod. " This confounded hog's food is simply destroying my bowels. We need good peasant food, bacon, eggs, milk . . ."

" Yes," said I, " that is true — but how can we do it, Pod? "

" Let us simply report as farm-hands, farmers by vocation. You go with me as interpreter — "

" But you are the only one who understands anything about it."

" That does not matter. I'll teach all of you in a jiffy. As for the rest . . ." He drew a deep breath. " I must see grain and cattle and fields again for once, my lad. . . . I shall be glad to work for you all."

" Yes," said I in a low voice as he got up, " we will try it, Pod. I shall report this very day."

When we inquired about the condition of the peasants in the country, an Austrian told us that, for the most part, they were well off, but that the conditions on the large estates were terrible. " I was on a prince's estate, and it was worse there than in the lead-mines," he said. " We got only dog's food and had to work until we broke down, and when we were sent back to the camp, they would not take us in, because they said they had ' delivered healthy men.' The worst of all was the flogging. A man who stopped work from sheer exhaustion was lashed until the blood came . . . and when he fainted, they just waited till he came too, and went on again. But, as I have already said," he concluded, " the small peasants are said to be as well off as at home. . . ."

Seven of us reported, Pod, Brünn, Blank, the conjurer, the Schwalangscher, the Tadpole. The two Bavarian sons of farm-

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ers were eager to do the same when they heard of it, and I willingly put them on the list; for they really knew how to work.

After a fortnight a favourable answer came. The Zemskaja Uprawa assigned us to Goloustnoje, a village on the western shore of Lake Baikal, north of Irkutsk. We were waiting for transport there when Blank was again seized with high fever, and we had to leave him behind in the care of the one-year volunteers, decent fellows, who promised to attend to him well. Schnarrenberg was not suggested as a substitute, for we knew it was Seydlitz's wish to have his assistance and protection.

In this dilemma a "May-bug," a shrewd man from Berlin, applied to me. "Could I not go with you in place of the sick man?" he said. "I managed the whole work of a farm once and could help you in many ways. Besides," he continued, half to himself, "they are looking for me, and it is easy to find me in the camp."

"What have you done?" I asked smilingly.

"Oh," he said quickly, "nothing bad, it was only . . . The farmer's wife, you know, with whom I was, got a child from me. . . . That was nothing bad — we lived as one family, and I was cock of the walk . . . until one day news came that her husband had been wounded and would come back. Then I quit, preferring to go to a camp. . . . I am afraid that he will be looking for me some day and find me . . . Lord knows how they would punish me then."

"Hm," I said, "that is dangerous, and may cost you your life if the husband, out of revenge, represents your deed as a crime, as rape. You shall come, of course."

The little village of Goloustnoje was soon reached. Our guard, Hildebrant by name, a clever Jew who spoke German fluently, was from that region and was heartily greeted in the village.

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It was a fishing hamlet and farming village in one. Nets were hanging from the houses, ploughs were standing in the yards, and from the house one looked out on the blue infinity of Lake Baikal, the Siberian ocean.

The peasant was a blonde, broad-hipped woman of about thirty years. Her husband, a powerful fellow, according to her, had been recruited in the year 1914. Her apparent distrust of us vanished when Hildebrant, provided by us with roubles, explained to her in detail that here was a select group of German peasants, men who would bring the harvest in better than it had ever been done before. "That is easily possible," muttered Brünn ironically.

That first night Pod did not close an eye. I heard him incessantly talking to himself. "These ploughs are from the time of the Napoleonic wars. . . . But that's no matter. . . . The scythes are quite usable as far as I could see . . . not first class, to be sure, but all the same . . . The wagons are awful, wooden axles; oh, Lord! . . . All that will go into such a cart my Anna could take on one pitchfork. . . . Otherwise a good worker, this woman. . . . A pair of strong arms . . . quite good food. . . . If I could but understand her. . . . The horses regular Cossack-killers. . . . The cows large goats. . . . Not one ever cleaned. . . . Well, we shall see. . . . There are cows and horses, wagons and scythes, grain and grass — what more do I need?"

Early next morning work began, work that would go on in the same way until the autumn. Pod without question took command, the May-bug helping him and giving advice. At first Brünn and I were a week with the cows, so as to curry their neglected hides in Schleswig-Holstein manner for the first time in our lives, while the Schwalangscher and the Tadpole did the same with the horses in Bavarian fashion. Good Hildebrant, "kindest of men," as the conjurer said, walked from one couple to the other with a long bayonet which

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flashed dangerously. Nevertheless, freedom prevailed — sweet, warm, fragrant freedom. . . .

After a fortnight the harvest began. Pod mowed with a flourish that fairly made his scythe sing. I thought of Hodler's "Mighty Mowers" when I looked at him. The May-bug mowed with the two Bavarians behind him, while the proprietress, Brünn, Hatschek, and I gathered the corn into sheaves and bound them. For the first few days we were all tired to death, despite our joy, for the heat was almost unbearable, reaching nearly forty degrees when there was no sea breeze.

Pod alone felt nothing of it. Pod was happy. Pod was at home.

"Man," he said daily, "and this I have once again, once again. Come now what may, I shall hold out to the end."

Rest at evening in Goloustnoje. We sat in front of the house on a bench which the conjurer had made, and below us gleamed the blue, gently stirring sea. The good Hildebrant chatted of everything imaginable, while the astonished proprietress, and often a couple of neighbours, listened attentively. How kind all these people were to us when no Shrew-mouse was near. . . .

One day Hildebrant brought an "extra," which I read aloud. There were accounts in it of terrible horrors, of violation of women and mutilation of children — all ancient and silly gossip.

"To think that you are so wicked!" cried the proprietress, amazed.

I explained to her that it was untrue, that such accounts were only written so that the men would go into battle in good faith and not curse the war. "What do your prisoners write of the war?" I asked.

"Niko, my nephew, fares well, very well. And my Ivan, too, writes that he cannot complain . . ."

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"Well, you see. And do you know that the letters of your prisoners were destroyed in Petersburg a short time ago because they reported only good of us? In order that, with the help of God, your hatred should not cease . . . !"

A peasant cursed. "That is low," he said.

"Listen, Pod," I said, "tell me honestly if you have ever seen anything of what this paper speaks."

"No," he said quietly. "And I was in it from the very beginning. But in East Prussia I saw with my own eyes a woman crucified by the Cossacks."

I translated. "Yes, the Cossacks . . ." the proprietress conceded.

"And you, Brünn?" I asked further. "No," he said hesitatingly.

I clenched my fists. "What is to be done?" I said angrily.

"Avoid war," answered Brünn shortly. "It all comes from the war. The simplest thing is to make no more war."

The sound of singing rose from the shore of the Baikal. The voices of four girls and two lads, still almost boys, rang out into the ocean. It was the song of "The Captives," one of those yearningly sad songs peculiar to this people who have for centuries been oppressed like no other people.

"However," said Hildebrant, suddenly, "in the end you will be conquered, you Germans."

"Well, yes," said Pod, "and no wonder, if the whole world is begged to attack us from all sides. . . ."

The summer was over and the leaves had begun to turn. Brünn had been in high spirits for some days. He no longer slept with us and was growing stouter every day. "Country air seems to agree with you splendidly," I said. "Yes," he said laughingly, "but chiefly bed!"

Almost every evening I heard him sing: "Therefore, lassie, do not weep . . ."

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The leaves had fallen and the fields were bare. In Siberia the harvest lasts five months. "Now it will soon be over, Pod." I had to prepare him slowly, or he could not bear it, I thought anxiously. He gave me a look that cut me. "What . . . ?" he stammered. "What do you mean, lad?"

"That we must soon return to the camp, Pod."

He turned away and went to the cows and horses. Should I follow him? No. At such times dumb beasts are better friends than human beings. . . .

In spite of all his precautions fate overtook the May-bug on the last day but three. I was alone in the yard when a peasant came up, a powerful, gigantic cut-throat, with a notched stick of wood in his right hand. One could see that he had come a long distance. "I am looking for Kulicke," he said in a tired voice, "a German prisoner of war, a man from Berlin. I was told in Irkutsk that he is working on this farm."

Before I could give Hildebrant a sign, he volunteered: "Yes, he is here. What do you want with him?"

"Oh, nothing. . . ." After a while my comrades came back from the field, the May-bug walking beside Pod and chatting with him, not dreaming of danger. "Oh God," I thought, "this giant of a man will kill him. . . ."

"That is he, there, the tall dark one," said Hildebrant, pointing to him.

The peasant ran towards him with uplifted hands. "It is you," he said, "you? For weeks I have been wandering about trying to find you. How shall I thank you for all you did for me and my farm? The cows are full of milk, the pigs have little ones, and four calves have been born. . . . And do you know, brother — the boy is a prize baby. . . ."

When we returned to the camp, Schnarrenberg greeted me with unusual warmth. "I have been waiting for you," he said.

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"We could not have gone on much longer." Seydlitz grasped my hand heartily. "Yes, Schnarrenberg is right," he said with a weak smile. "We are too much accustomed to one another. There was a hole in our life while you were away."

Little Blank was considerably better, though he was still coughing a bit. . . . "No," he said gaily, "the one-year volunteers really took good care of me, and I am heartily grateful to them. . . ." "There is something about him which was not there before," I thought broodingly. "He is much more shy. What is the reason?"

Nothing out of the ordinary had happened in the camp, nothing new except that the cesspit was to be cleared out before the winter came. "Very well, we must travel again," said Pod, indifferently. For three days there was nothing but story-telling. Everyone knew a story and everyone boasted a little. Only Brünn was silent, strikingly silent. "Well," asked Blank at last, "and what have you to tell us?"

"Man," said Brünn sulkily, "leave me in peace. In spite of roses and narcissus, in life there is generally something that one misses — rhyme the rest for yourself," he concluded rudely.

When we were washing next morning, I saw that Blank had red spots on his neck and shoulders. "Oh Lord!" I cried, frightened, "what is the matter with you, boy?"

"Why?" he asked.

"You are full of spots . . ."

"Hush, Ensign, please," he cried.

I looked at him in astonishment. He had reddened up to his hair. "No, I really do not understand it . . ."

"May I speak to you this evening?" he asked in a low voice.

"Certainly. . . ."

I went about confused until evening. There must be some

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reason for the change in him, I thought. But, whatever he might confess, I would help him as well as I could. . . .

At twilight we went out in front of the barracks and leaned against the wall in the dark. "Well, boy?" I said encouragingly.

He swallowed a few times. "Oh," he said at last, "it is terribly difficult to speak of it, but I have no one to ask but you. Do you know little Funker? He sleeps next to the bed of the one-year volunteers. You see, he nursed me, and once came to me at night . . . I like him, you know . . . and I was so helpless. . . . At first I was horrified. . . . Now I do not know what to do. . . . I always make up my mind to turn him off, but cannot do so any more, I fear. . . ." He was silent for a while, breathed loud a few times, and said: "Do you despise me now?"

I shook my head. My God! What should I say to him? It was not to my credit that I could control my body better . . . it was merely that I had no surplus — for such things. . . . Perhaps as far as that side of captivity was concerned, my own hour would strike some day. . . .

"No," I said, "of course not. However, you must fight against it."

"Yes, it is a sin . . ." he said, weakly.

"No," I said, "not on that account. That does not matter for us here in our condition. . . ."

"But it is very harmful, isn't it?"

"No, not that either. It is only . . . it is dangerous. . . . One changes physically without noticing it, I believe, and one day. . . . Who knows how long we may still have to wait? Here it is only need — but if it became a habit, and you went home and never wanted to touch a girl again . . . ?"

"Oh," he said, and I knew by his voice that he was smiling — little, bashful, driven Blank — "I do not fear that, Ensign,

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for . . . I only kiss him . . . only in thought as a girl, and because he looks so much like one."

Hatschek and Brünn were speaking about military doctors, and Brünn said: "I am fed up with them — they were all butchers. Did not a surgeon-major say to me, when I was unable to go to the front because of my heart: 'Oh, that's nothing, my dog had it too'?"

"He may have had his reasons —" Schnarrenberg said.

Such a remark might lead to a quarrel. "Indeed? . . ." I interposed. "They are all butchers, are they?"

"Well, I never knew any better ones," said Brünn obstinately.

I grew angry. "Indeed?" I said for the second time. "And you others? Are you silent? It is not fair to look at one side only. Have you really never come across a doctor who was as kind as the one who tortured you was cruel?"

"Oh, yes," said Blank softly. "When I remember Dr. Bockhorn . . ."

"There!" said I angrily. "But your brains are like sieves in which only what is coarse remains. . . ."

We had scarcely got used to our surroundings again when we heard that we were to be moved once more. The order to march was only applied to our barracks and the neighbouring one, and before we had regained our composure, the "Totzkoje cavalry squad" was again rolling in *tjeplushkis* beside Lake Baikal. We had joined the one-year volunteer division, and together we just filled one wagon.

For two days we went east, around the southern shore of Lake Baikal. Pod looked with wide-open eyes towards the western shore, where lay "his" farm, with grain and cows and horses. Brünn cursed for two days, even more loudly than usual. Even the mercurial Tadpole was sad.

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The Trans-Siberian railway passes through forty-six tunnels in the mountains that enclose the sea on its south-eastern shore. The ice-covered stones looked like glittering, glassy bells on the shores. Winter was coming again for the second time. . . .

In Nerchneudinsk our guards were changed. Up till then our board-money — twenty-five copecks per day per head — had been kept from us on the ground that the larger notes must be changed before we could be paid, but when we asked the new leader to change the money for us, he only said: "Certainly, from tomorrow. . . ." And we understood that with the old leader the large notes had also disappeared!

We cursed dreadfully. No one had any money, and even though we "farm-labourers" still had a few pence of our wages — what was that among forty men? "Swindled again . . ." muttered Pod, enraged. "Lord," Brünn said, "they find new tricks every day by which to cheat us and enrich themselves." "We are always worse off during transport," said the Tadpole, adding: "For this reason alone, they send us to a fresh camp every six weeks. . . ."

Everyone agreed to what was said. Gradually evening came, and ever farther towards the east rolled the train. "Now comes the worst region, as far as I know," said Seydlitz suddenly. "Transbaikalia, the land of the deported and of the lead-mines." As if in confirmation, at this very moment we caught sight of a little group of the deported, who, rattling their heavy chains, were being driven through the desert at the side of our train.

"This was all that we needed," said Seydlitz in a hard voice.

We were speaking of leave. We often spoke of things that seemed perfectly senseless. How could we have borne the constantly increasing hunger of our souls if we had not satisfied it now and then with dreams? "What would you do,

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Junker, if they suddenly gave you eight weeks of leave?" asked Brünn.

I smiled. "I cannot tell all in a moment. . . . I should probably go to the Baltic Sea, but not on account of home. . . . On account of the water, on account of the bathing. . . . Eight times in the water daily for eight weeks should make one clean again, I think. . . ."

"And you, Pod?" he asked.

"I might plough," said Pod slowly, "or sow or reap, according to the season. . . ."

Brünn threw back his head contemptuously. "You think only of working!" he said mockingly. "And you, girlie?" he continued.

"Oh, my God!" said Blank. "To begin with I should go every evening to a beer-garden, where there is dancing on Sundays. And for a week I should go back to my firm, to my old place behind the counter, without asking for any salary, just for fun. . . ."

"Stop, man," cried Brünn. "During my holiday I shouldn't want to hear anything about business, that will come soon enough. No, boys, I should do something quite different. For the first four weeks I should not stir out of my feather-bed, but . . . No, on such a holiday one ought not to be married. On such an occasion one ought to be able to do as a famous man about whom I once read a story did — Vasova, or some such name."

"Casanova?" I interjected.

"That's right — Ca-sa-no-va — who, after a long fast, snapped up two, two sisters at that. . . . That would be the right thing. He described it, I tell you —"

"In former times," Blank, reddening, interrupted him, evidently just to give the conversation a turn, "officers were discharged on their word of honour to return after a certain time, so I read."

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"What!" cried Brünn. "Man, that ought to be done still. Do you know what I would do then? I'd whistle at my word of honour and they would not see me again."

Next day we shall be there! so the rumour ran. My God! In this desert! The land lay before us like a frozen ocean. Thin snow glittered on the wind-protected inclines, but where the wind had scattered it, naked, often rocky, ground showed up. Not a tree or a shrub as far as the eye could see. "Yes, this is Transbaikalia," said Seydlitz. "I know it from the book *Siberia*, by Kennan. This is the margin of the Gobi desert, which begins in this region, and one of the next provinces is Chinese and called Manchuria."

We were detrained at a small railway station with a water-tower on the right, a miserable hamlet on the left. Towards the north, in a flat depression, we saw sixteen or eighteen stone barracks. "That is our camp," somebody cried. The enclosure, a fence of boards higher than a man, with barbed wire and tall sentry-towers at the corners, began just past the railway station, and when the gates were opened for us to go in, we were surprised to see that the lower part was an officer's camp and that the men's camp, those very stone barracks, was a short march away.

Some two or three hundred officers standing on the lower yard looked after our procession of beggars with serious eyes as we crossed their camp. They were mostly in grey uniforms, Austrians of every rank, from cadet to colonel. Of German officers I particularly noticed a young aviator, some oldish first-lieutenants, and an artillery ensign. "An ensign?" thought I, strangely moved. Was that meant as a sign for me? They all looked comparatively well dressed, not nearly so ragged as we, and their faces, though haggard, were not so grey as ours.

After leaving the officers' camp, which was surrounded only

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by a fence of barbed wire, we passed for a while through sand as fine as dust, real desert sand, until we came to the stone barracks, where a building on the left wing had been assigned to us. What else was there to say? Here the conditions were as everywhere else. Two rows of plank beds, one above the other, huge, unheated stoves, miserable lamps without oil. But we were glad to drop from our backs the packs of uniforms from Totzkoje. They served many purposes, could be used to lie on, or hung upon cord as partitions. It was so cold that we stood with our hands in our pockets, scarcely daring to move.

"Well, let us all settle down again," said Seydlitz calmly, very skilfully and neatly making a mattress out of his Austrian uniforms.

Brünn, discouraged, threw his bundle noisily on the plank bed, sat down on it, and buried his head in his hands. "Man," he muttered, "if I had only got a bullet through my head at the front!"

"You might have got it," cried Schnarrenberg, enraged. Weakness had excited him to unreasonableness, and he knew Brünn from the field. "You need only have shirked less!"

"Shut up," said Brünn, tired. He was too weak now even to quarrel.

During the first nights those stone barracks were so icy that many got bladder trouble. After one night I myself was so bad that I had no time to jump up and run out. It seemed as if all closing muscles had become inactive, so that the urine just ran without control. We had no change of underwear, and what we were wearing had stuck to the skin for the past year. How could healing come if we were wet into the bargain? Nor did it, for we grew worse every day. "How degrading this is!" I thought, setting my teeth. At last I found a preserving-can

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on a heap of dirt. I placed it on my plank bed, and at least did not have to run out at a temperature of forty-five degrees below zero. But often it was of no use, for the urine ran so quickly that I could not get hold of the can, and at such times I almost wept with rage. . . .

Pod watched me grimly. "We must have wood, lad," he said resolutely, "else you will be afflicted for all your life."

"Certainly, Pod, but how?"

"In the neighbouring barracks I have seen a space that is full of unoccupied plank beds. We will break up a couple of those." He consulted the conjurer, who was ready to help. I waited anxiously for a few hours in case a sentry should catch them. . . . At last they came back with empty hands, but Pod with four marks of lashes on his face, and Hatschek dragging one leg after him. "They nabbed us. The wood is lost for all time."

"Damned existence," he broke forth, "damned existence . . ."

One day a volunteer told of Murmansk. "Seventy thousand men were brought to build the 'death' railway," he said. "We had to stand for eighteen hours every day, badly fed, up to our waists in ice and mud. We had neither proper lodging, nor clothing to change into when ours was wet. Once several freight cars were sent with sick men from where we were working to the next town, and not a single man was alive at the end of the journey. All had either starved or frozen to death. Of sixty thousand men, over thirty thousand were driven to death at Murmansk. It has truly been said that every sleeper of that railway lies on a corpse!"

A few days later, when I went out to get some fresh air, a long-haired dog ran up to me. I stroked him with hands that almost trembled. How long it was since a dog had pressed

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close against me! It was a powerful animal, a Siberian sledge dog, such as are seen in pictures with Eskimos, famished and longing for affection. Was he from the village? Had he run away? A great feeling of happiness filled me, instantly giving birth to the desire to keep him.

"Will you come with me?" I asked affectionately. "Will you stay with me? I'll manage the food with my cavalry squad." The dog wagged its tail and looked at me lovingly from brown, almost human eyes. "Very well," said I. "Then let us go. Come, Suschka." It followed at once, and was greeted with joy by the squad. "This is our regimental dog now," Blank announced, with shining eyes, while Pod pressed it mutely to his broad breast, and even Seydlitz stroked it once. I got bits from everybody, some muscle from the midday soup, some bread-crust from the day before. When I lay down, the dog stretched himself out beside me as a matter of course. How warming it was! I shoved him a little towards the lower part of my body, against my bladder, and, covering both of us with my cloak, I slept as I had not done for a long time. Even the next day my bladder was a little better, and after three days it was completely cured. "This is a medicine dog," said Pod, astonished.

A Swedish pastor came to hold divine service in the barracks and at the end gave communion to all who wished for it. "Shall we go up, *Junker?*" asked Pod. We all went, except the Bavarians, Brünn, and the conjurer. About a hundred men, ragged and bloodless, knelt down before the sacred symbol. With fine tact, the young pastor avoided the Bible, giving us in his own words what we needed, enlivening and strengthening messages. The red wine burned our tongues and reached our very hearts. We were invigorated as from an actual meal.

When we came back, Brünn was sitting on his plank bed. His eyes were sunken, he looked weak and stupefied, and there

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was a contemptuous twitching about the corners of his mouth.

"Why did you not go with us, Brünn?" I asked.

"For me there is no God any more," he said coldly.

"Since when?" asked Pod.

"If you must know, since Totzkoje," said Brünn spitefully.

We were allowed to write home. At last, at last. . . . Four cards and one letter in a month, so ran the order. Schnarrenberg distributed the printed cards, and there was bustle and talk in our den as if we had won the lucky number in a lottery. Almost all were writing, with boot-soles or pieces of board on their knees for writing-pads. I used my diary, but to whom should I write? To my father, no one else. . . . The one who would have valued what I had to say was no more. To my father, therefore. And what should I write to him? The truth could not be told in three sentences, and in any case would not pass the censor. So I only wrote that I was alive and hoped to return home some day. I told him I was still wearing the clothes I had on when taken captive, and begged him for underwear, soap, brush, and comb. I added that my wounds were healed, but that I still dragged one leg a little.

When would he receive this first sign of life from one believed to be dead, I thought, smiling? In five, six weeks at the soonest, perhaps not for months — home lay so far away! Perhaps it would never reach him at all; perhaps in some fight at sea he had long since . . .

"*Junker*," said Pod at this moment, "write 'Germany' on my card in Russian letters, it will be better, eh? You may read it if you like. . . ."

I wrote "*Germania*" in large letters and read his last line, which ran: "Don't forget that this year potatoes must be planted in the rye-field, Anna. . . ."

Our comradeship began to weaken. Though I struggled against this knowledge, what I had to see every day was

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stronger than my wishing and wanting. In our cavalry corner it was still present in a way, but for how long no one knew. It was crumbling everywhere, and if it was breaking up in our group, which the field and front had welded together, how could it remain in the other groups, which had only drifted together in the camps through some wind of fate.

With us Brünn was the most striking example. He now thought only of himself and grew more spiteful every day. Schnarrenberg, too, by his provocative manner, got into a sort of chronic irritation and appeared harder and more brutal than he really was. Little Blank, who had grown somewhat dolorous and needed a great deal of comfort and support, was becoming ruined morally. The two Bavarians, who had, as it were, belonged to our cavalry corner since Irkutsk, were ruder and more uncontrolled than at first, but still bearable, obliging, and ready to help. Only Pod, Seydlitz, and the conjurer had remained the same. And I myself? Alas, I too was no longer what I ought to be. . . .

God in heaven, it was no wonder! If one could have got out, seen other people, other faces . . . ! If it had been summer! Besides Brünn and Blank, we of the cavalry corner went out into the yard every day with three tunics on. There were few who still had the energy to go out every day for a walk, few who recognized that tuberculosis attacked everyone who did not daily fill his lungs with fresh air, and who would face forty degrees of cold and the icy blast of a desert wind at fifty degrees in order to avert another evil.

It was lasting too long. Noble sentiments are the fruit of great moments and cannot be preserved, like ripe fruit in cans, to be consumed in larger or smaller portions according to need or demand! In the field there had been comradeship. Was it there still, would it be there up to the last hour, even if the war went on for years? This was no soil for comradeship. . . .

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We had been comrades in Totzkoje, for instance, and we should be comrades still if some deed were demanded of us, or in case of sudden danger. But there was nothing sudden here, everything was creeping, was paralysed. . . . Our forced confinement was malicious and enervating, demoralizing and vile. . . . The fixed, constant unhappiness, the never-ending, daily recurrence, does not weld together, but rather rends asunder. There was nothing doing here, no hopes; that was probably the reason . . . the constant idleness, the incessant hunger, the eternal need of being alone . . . that was no soil for comradeship.

We gradually became spiteful like old dogs, faultfinding and malicious, like withered old men. We were becoming like animals, and if the end did not come soon we should end in hating one another.

"What is it you are always writing?" asked Pod.

I closed my diary impassively. "Everything, Pod," I said confused.

"Everything? How is that?"

"Well," I said, "everything that happens here. What is spoken, what is done, how everyone feels and acts . . ."

"Then I am in your book also?"

"Certainly, Pod."

"Well, how, for instance?"

"Whatever you do, say, or tell . . ."

"Man," he laughed outright, "what for? I am a stupid old fool. Who could ever take an interest in me?"

I smiled to myself. "Perhaps more than you think, Pod. You forget that in my book you stand for nine hundred thousand, who all suffered what you suffered, who all resembled you . . . and Brünn for a hundred thousand like himself, who felt this life as he did. . . ."

"Yes," said Pod, putting his finger to the side of his nose, "now I understand. And Schnarrenberg and Seydlitz and the

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conjurer? And Blank and the Bavarians and yourself? And the Turks and Hungarians and Austrians? Do you speak of all, eh? Of all the two and a quarter millions? "

"Yes," I said, "and these ten or twelve I describe represent, as it were — "

"And so you want to publish it some time? " Pod interrupted me.

"Perhaps, Pod . . ."

After a short silence he said: "Very well, go on writing, and write of me also. It is quite right for those at home to know how the blood was sucked from our living bodies and what we thought of, spoke of, felt. But it will only be of value if you neither beautify nor conceal anything."

"Of course, Pod."

"Then it will be prohibited," he said quickly.

"Why? "

"Because it is so horrible, so hateful, so low."

"Truth does not need a handsome dress. It is most beautiful when naked, my dear Pod," I replied. "Lies cannot help the world and the generations yet to come."

Brünn had a visitor, an electrician, who spoke, like himself, in professional metaphors and in strangely chopped-up phrases. He was in the transport that came after us, had a black, shaggy beard, a face like a mummy, and a very hoarse voice.

"It was in Stretensk, a miserable Cossack hamlet, east of the Baikal, on the Schilka," the man related, "and my death's-head look dates from those days. They thrust us into summer barracks through whose cracks we could see the desert. They were on a steep mountain side and we had to carry up the water from the river. Eight hundred of us were put where there was only room for five hundred, and of course typhus fever broke out. We took one of the barracks as an isolation house, but no one wanted to go into it. They preferred to stay

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with their comrades. They lay in twos without straw or covering and with logs of wood for pillows.

"We suffered most from thirst," continued the man, "but whoever dragged himself out into the snow to try to quench it was driven back by the Cossacks with knouts, for fear of infection. We sometimes drank water from the privies, and at last, when we realized that we should all die, we mutinied. . . . One can mutiny without weapons when an empty hospital stands locked up near by, when one knows that the Russian physicians have blankets and pillows and medicine in abundance and won't give them out. Moreover, an American commission in Irkutsk — with doctors and nurses and all possible material — had already been waiting for weeks to help us. It was of no use. We were whipped back like cattle into our dens by mounted persecutors, and when whole groups of our men sought death in the river in order to be relieved of their torments, the commander had it guarded by sentinels. We were not even allowed to take our own lives. On Christmas Day, 1915, Elsa Brändström came to Stretensk and rescued the handful that still remained.

"Almost like Totzkoje," said Brünn. "So we were not the only ones who fared so badly."

"Well," cried Seydlitz, "what more do we want? We are in heaven here compared with Totzkoje and Stretensk, so be satisfied."

Only a few had been able to withstand the gradual weakening of both body and soul, and while they did their best to help the others, the majority had grown too impatient and callous to take advantage of their help.

One day packages came from home for some of those longest in the camp, and, among others, to a young infantry soldier on a neighbouring plank bed, his first package from home, and at an unobserved moment I saw him patting the

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new shirts and pressing home the home-knitted stockings to his lips.

"Ensign," he said towards evening, and I saw his eyes shining as I had seen but few shine, "I have got my first package from home, from my mother. Now I am saved. Should you like to see it?" As he showed it to me, I felt that though he had already unpacked and packed it three or four times, he could still see his mother's hands on the little articles. . . .

The next morning I noticed the same boy weeping bitterly and went over to him. Pod came, Pod, who was always at hand when anyone was crying. "What are you whimpering about, you fool?" he asked rudely; for he was always rudest when softest at heart.

"They have . . . they have . . ."

"Ah, hm . . . there was a can of fish in it, too, you say?"

"Yes, herrings. . . ."

"All right." Pod started, his nose to the ground, a veritable hunting-dog, and came back, an hour later, with the package under his arm. "But the fish is gone," said he. "But mother did not do that up herself, eh? Here, my boy, take better care next time."

We climbed up on to our plank bed. "Who was it, Pod?"

"Meyer, of course, who else could it be?" Meyer was a bad sort, known to be a thief and a fighter.

"What did you do to him?"

"Oh, nothing, only put one, two, three on his thievish face. . . ."

In the evening I learnt that Meyer had been put into the hospital. Pod must have half beaten him to death. I said he would get the knout for it if anyone told on him.

"Oh," said Pod calmly, "that doesn't matter. The boy has his package again, which is the principal thing. As for the rest, Meyer will steal no more and I — I have a broad back."

Brünn gradually turned away from us. He had been making

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new friends and was not very particular in his choice. They were usually those who could not contradict what he said.

Once he said: "Our position here and the way we are treated are only the natural consequences of our policy. What is a German soldier? An object, a number, an animal . . ."

"How so?" somebody asked in astonishment.

"How so? I will explain. All of us have an open pimple, haven't we? — those round things that make the most intelligent face look foolish. We are said to be a multitude, indistinguishable from one another because of this thing. Only the higher ones are allowed to look decent — the N.C.O., the regimental sergeant major, the Colonel. They wear caps with shields so that they may be distinguished from us at a distance."

"Yes, but . . ."

"Yes, but? Don't you understand yet, Muschko? It is all a question of command. The German troops in their huckaback and pimples are nothing but convicts, and it is because we look so silly in those things, in such prison-garb, that we are treated so badly. Why do all other armies wear smart head-coverings. Just look at the English caps . . ."

"Yes, but . . ." somebody said timidly.

"Stuff — but!" he roared. "If you are too stupid to understand this, it is your own fault, and that ends it!"

"Yes, full stop," Pod called over to him. "And now shut up your big barn-door. We want to sleep."

The winter dragged slowly on. Our one and only wish was for the spring. Many died in this, my second, winter of captivity. We alone did not notice it so much, because our doctors, with the help of Elsa Brändström, had established a model hospital for the sick. All we noticed in spring was that some of the plank beds were empty, and we had much more room than we had had during the winter.

In our disconsolate position it made us very happy to know

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that there was a refuge in a hospital with physicians. As was inevitable in a pen where the windows were sealed up, consumption made rapid progress among us. Scurvy and nyctalopia, well-known symptoms of famine, increased fourfold. So far fever had passed us by, but even without that there was quite enough to break our tired bodies. We were already between Scylla and Charybdis. When we couldn't sleep for cold, the lice didn't trouble us, and when we were warm, we couldn't sleep for lice, so what were we to do?

One day there was a violent fight, which would certainly have spread over the whole barracks if it had not been for Pod, who sprang with a sudden bound on to a plank bed and in his thunderous voice shouted above the noise: "Two men to stir the blood!" Everyone laughed, and the crowd dispersed. He who laughs does not fight. Our Pod was still a pillar of strength, the same in spite of torture. . . . Afterwards I learnt that the fight was for possession of a photograph of a naked girl, which was shown round secretly that evening by its owner. But he got no more good from it than we did — only exciting dreams of passion, but it seemed to gratify him to show his precious possession.

Conditions rapidly grew worse. No consideration was shown to those either writing or sleeping. Wanting to write again to my father, I loosened a couple of leaves from my diary and sat down on my plank bed.

"It is so difficult to say the right thing, father," I wrote. "And it is equally difficult not to complain. We do not want to be unjust or to ask for anything that cannot be given but . . ."

They were playing cards on the next plank bed. "Trumps," roared a powerful gunner, as he slapped his flat hand down on the boards and made them shake. I put one finger to my ear and went on writing. "What tortures us most is that we

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cannot see an end to this. You may not know, but perhaps you can see it, very small, like a distant star. We only see a night that is always growing blacker and more torturing and threatens to engulf us . . ."

"Good Lord, man, leave my boots alone, you confounded thief," somebody shrieked. A log of wood flew through the air, came down on the corner of my plank bed, and grazed my head. The boot-thief stole away as if he heard nothing.

"There are only a few among us who are still strong and uncontaminated, whose marrow has not been frozen by these years, father. But if it lasts much longer, not one will come out of it without a canker in his flesh or in his soul. We are all brave, and the weakest are perhaps the bravest, but what is demanded of us is beyond our strength."

A shout indicated that someone had cheated at cards. A circle of onlookers filled the corridor. Unfortunately Pod was absent just then. The black-haired electrician had someone by the collar, shaking him as a dog does a rat. At last the man tore himself loose and doubled up his fists. "Give it to him," shouted Brünn, egging him on. I heard the sound of a couple of blows struck on naked flesh. Blood flowed. . . . "I'll choke the breath out of you, you thieving dog," panted the electrician. "And if I myself shall survive these years with a pure soul, father, I do not know . . ." I wrote slowly, and my hand resembled a famished spider crawling slowly over yellowed leaves.

As soon as the cold lessened and was only thirty degrees, according to the doctor, Seydlitz and I walked silently three times round the camp every day. "A fight against tuberculosis," we called it.

As we were passing for the third time the white fence that separated us from the officers, we met an Austrian Lieutenant. When we saluted him, he thanked us and walked on a little,

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then suddenly stood still. "I have noticed you taking this walk for a couple of weeks past," he said, smiling. "It is terrible in there, I suppose?"

I was silent and Seydlitz pressed his lips together. "It is endurable," he said coldly.

"How long have you been captive?" he then asked.

"Since 1915," we said.

"That is two years. I have been here since 1914. . . ."

"Are there good reports from the front?" asked Seydlitz curtly.

"Yes," he said. "But what's the use of that? Victory upon victory and still not peace! What is your rank?" he asked, interested.

"I am a N.C.O.," said Seydlitz, "Cornet."

"Ensign," said I in a low voice.

"Ensign?" he cried. "What are you doing in the soldiers' camp? You belong to us."

"I have good comrades," I said, "from the field, from my regiment, from the hospital . . ."

"I can understand that. Nevertheless . . . You could visit them from here also, would even be able to help them better from here. You would get fifty roubles a month. . . ."

"Yes," I said weakly. "I know all that, but —"

"Listen," he interrupted, "come to visit me and bring your friend with you. I am a good deal with an Ensign of the artillery who would be mighty glad, I think . . ."

"Yes," said I, "we should like to do that very much, but the sentries wouldn't let us pass —"

He laughed. "That is simple. Do you know any French or English? Then report to the commandant for giving lessons. As a teacher of a language you will get a *propusk*, a pass."

"Yes," we said, "we will try it."

"All right," he said, and held out his hand through the

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barbed wire. "You need only ask for me. My name is Saltin. They all know me. . . ."

We went home. "Shall we do it, Seydlitz?" I asked thoughtfully, for something within me had sounded a warning.

"I don't know, Ensign. You can do it easily enough. Go over for good when you can no longer bear it here. As for me — "

"That is just what I fear," I said in a low voice.

He walked on in silence, the furrows deepening in his lean face. "Three days later I should have been captured as ensign," he said at last. "Well, better ones than I have had to bear it, so I can."

I have had my father's first card, and he is alive and well. What more did I want? I felt happier, although one line ran: "Our lot is harder than yours, yet we do not complain." "Oh, father, father, if you but knew!" I thought bitterly. . . . But he is not to blame, how could he know? No one knew. "But they shall know," thought I, as I pressed my treasured book to my heart and tried to forget that line. I wanted only the happiness from that card. There was such need of it, such need. . . . The longer the winter lasted, the more terrible it seemed. Would spring never come this year?

One day Brünn had irritated Schnarrenberg so much by one of his sarcastic lectures that he fell upon him without further ado. By his sensible way of living Schnarrenberg had kept himself in better form physically than any of us, but Brünn was just like a limp piece of rubber. In his excitement Schnarrenberg had beaten him so badly that he was unconscious for some time. Some were pleased, but the majority hated Schnarrenberg now more than ever, partly because of his bodily strength, and partly because he was protected by the Russians as head of the barracks. But this event was significant of the mood we were in, a mood of increasing hate of man for man,

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which often, at the slightest cause, led to an almost insane outbreak.

On passing No. 3 barracks one day, I met an old acquaintance from the Grudetzki barracks, the man from the amputation ward who had been hit in the testicles. "Have we not already seen each other?" he asked. "Yes," I said, "in the hospital at Moscow. How are you?" "Oh," said he, "I don't know what to say, but I learnt long ago that all is up. You lied to me that time. I know why, and it was better that I should find out gradually. Now I don't care. I have an easier life. For here . . . When I see what some have to go through just on account of what was taken from me . . . And I should not have been cold-blooded myself . . . sometimes I am almost glad of it. I often think that everything in this world is made up for in some way. . . . Because of what I had to suffer I need not now writhe like a brute. . . . It will only become difficult when I am at home again. For my wife without children — But that is not to be thought of for the present," he added, saluting as he went off.

Seydlitz had just been with me. I had never seen him so cheerful. "Just think, Ensign," he said, as he gave me a letter from his mother, "my first letter, and it says that the order for my promotion was already out when I was captured."

"You see!" said I gaily. "And now you want to go over, don't you?"

"Yes," he said firmly, as he laid both hands on my shoulders. "Ensign," he continued, "you must understand me rightly, you above all. I could do no one any good by staying here. It is different for you in some ways, but I am alone. I have no one here to whom I am really attached and am probably not much liked. Perhaps I did not deserve anything else;

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and, finally, I want to take care of myself so that I may be able to serve our country after this is over."

"You are perfectly right," I said frankly. "And no one will think ill of you, if you — "

"Yes, but you! " he cried.

"How, I? "

"You must come with me, or you will die. I can see it, and if it does not have to be — "

"Very well, Seydlitz," I said smilingly. "Let us go and look at it first, and if we find a couple of human beings — you know what I mean by that — and if what Saltin said was true, we shall be able to help our men better. . . . Yes, we will go together."

We got our *propusk* without difficulty. We had been trying since midday, with the aid of a borrowed brush and my wash-bowl, to scrape at least the outer dirt from our uniforms. We made a raid against the lice and combed our soft, Christlike beards. "Are you going to the court ball? " asked Brünn sneeringly.

At the officers' camp we were directed to the stone barracks on the left, and, mounting a few steps, we found a door bearing a card: "Captain Schank. Lieutenant Saltin. Lieutenant Kovacs. Lieutenant Sineth."

Lieutenant Saltin was alone with a dark-skinned officer. He jumped up, took our cloaks from us, and called out: "Balinth " twice into the corridor. A Honved infantryman appeared and stood at attention. "Go to the mess, Balinth, and bring something to eat for three." The other man, a Hungarian Honved Lieutenant, courteously took his leave.

"There, my young friends," Saltin said. He had a long, blond face, nervous hands which he kept putting up to his mouth, warm blue eyes, and dark eyebrows. "The worst of it is behind us now, eh? In a month it will be spring. . . . "

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He nodded, smilingly. Here was a human being we could speak to, if only by exchanging glances. Everything was almost touching. We sat on chairs — roughly made, to be sure — at a narrow table made of boards from boxes . . . and when the soldier came back with coffee and rolls, I couldn't resist crying: "You are gloriously off here."

Saltin shook his head. "It only looks so. . . . Of course, I understand it must seem like paradise to you, but after living like this for three years . . . You see, if one wants to go to bed, the other three must get up. We can only wash by turn and go to bed one after the other . . . and one is never alone. There are hardly any books, much quarrelling, still more nervousness, and every minute some affair of honour. . . . In four weeks this existence would torment you as much as yours has done. One gets used to it quickly, and, taking our former life into consideration, and remembering how we were spoiled and privileged . . . we certainly do not suffer less than our soldiers. . . ."

He brought cigarettes, placed them on the table within easy reach, and we smoked happily. The cleanliness and comfort of this room almost intoxicated us. Saltin won our hearts from the first — would he have done so at home under normal conditions?

Time flew by. He spoke of a thousand things, and we drank in every word. How humble we had grown, like old slaves! The only thing that tormented us was the lice that now and then bit us ferociously, but, because we did not want him to notice, we restrained ourselves from the scratching that had become a habit.

It grew dark and we had to go home. "Soon again, my German friends," said Saltin cordially, as he shook hands and accompanied us to the barbed-wire fence. "And think it over, Ensign, whether you would not, after all . . ."

"A splendid fellow," murmured Seydlitz on our way home.

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"Yes, we have found one, haven't we?"

"Are the Germans also like that?" he asked.

"We shall see. . . ."

We went on in silence. Were we not a little horrified at the thought of our plank beds? Seydlitz suddenly stood still. "Ensign," he said, "weren't you struck by the fact that Saltin never seemed to be itchy?"

"Yes," I said eagerly, and he continued: "Do you think they have no lice there?" I doubted it. "It is only because of his fine bringing up," I said. But he didn't seem to understand. "I don't think that the best bringing up would be of any good when lice bite you, my good fellow," he said dryly. So this difficult problem was left unsolved until next time.

The day before, an order had come from the Russian commandant that threw our cavalry corner into the greatest excitement. "Since the number of dogs kept by the prisoners is constantly increasing, all animals must be sent to be destroyed. Disobedience of this order will be severely punished," Schnarrenberg read aloud.

We spent half the night talking over what was to be done with Suschka. All agreed that we would not give her up, that we would not be parted from her. Even Schnarrenberg, the only one who had taken no notice of the dog, was of the same mind. "But suppose someone in the barracks betrayed us?" was all he said. "You know that I have more enemies than friends. . . ."

"No fear of that," said Pod in his deep voice. "I'll take care of that. . . ." So we trained Suschka for a whole day to stay quiet, under a bundle of old uniforms, whatever noise went on. She understood very quickly and would slip at once on the order into her safe hiding-place and not stir. When she was perfect, Pod lifted Suschka on his arm like a child,

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walked with his most sailor-like gait into the middle of the barracks, mounted a plank bed, and loudly demanded a hearing.

"Listen, boys," he said with emphasis, "you have heard the order. You know we have a dog that belongs to us all, and we are resolved not to give her up. I am certain that none of you is rogue enough to betray an innocent creature, so we have decided to take you into our confidence. But if there should be a Judas among you," he continued, in a voice of thunder, "I will afterwards make life such a burden to him that he will have to follow this dog before four weeks are over." There was applause, Suschka barking in sympathy. "Three cheers for our Pod," called out little Blank in his high voice, and a hundred voices shouted: "Hurrah, hurrah!" Pod got down and came back. "They are all right, my Suschka," he said slowly, as he ran his fingers affectionately through her long hair.

Next day came the guards, led by a *starschi*, and carrying ropes and a couple of sacks. Schnarrenberg went quietly up to them. "I am barracks-commandant," he said firmly. "There is no dog in our room."

I translated. "Man," muttered Brünn, "he is not even lying! It is a bitch. . . ."

The guards sniffed and walked slowly through, while Suschka lay quiet as a mouse. My heart beat violently, and Pod scratched his head from nervousness. They made straight for our plank bed. . . .

At that moment there came a dreadful noise at the door like the sound of two men fighting. "Guards, guards, come and separate them!" cried some of the men. The guards, half afraid, ran towards the door. Nothing was the matter, only a couple of men flinging curses across to each other in every tone of the register, and smiling at the same time.

The sentries only came back as far as the door. All danger was over. "Didn't we do that well?" the two combatants cried.

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They were answered with rousing applause and carried in shoulder-high.

There was little real comradeship among us now, only the companionship of fellow convicts. We seemed to have become detached inwardly, but outwardly, towards our common enemy, the Russians, we were welded together into a strong, indestructible wall.

I kept on stroking Suschka, who was again lying on my lap. "Do you see, my dog?" I said happily; "even the roughest among us helped you. They are good, our boys, as we have just seen once more, good and kind of heart; but they are sick at times, sick and confused."

I made my first visit to the German officers and resolved to move over to them. The highest in rank among us was a man named Mittelberg, a grey-haired infantry Captain, short of speech and very resolute. When I explained our position to him, he said that he was keenly anxious to see us with him as soon as possible. "No need to perish if it can be avoided," he said. "We are sorry enough not to be able to make life easier for our soldiers. It is not our fault, but the result of reciprocal international agreements."

I told him of the life our men led, and begged him to order a few things. "We give a certain percentage of our board-money every month to assist our soldiers, and do all we can with it," he said, "but I hope that Miss Brändström will soon come again to look after things. As you know, our hands are tied. All intercourse with the troops is prohibited, and further rendered impossible by the sentries."

"Why, Captain?"

"No one knows. It is supposed from fear of an organization on our part — they apparently fear the German devils even without arms," he concluded, as he dismissed me.

From him I went to Seydlitz and Schnarrenberg. "Sergeant major," I said cheerfully, "we report ourselves as

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leaving. Tomorrow we go into the officers' camp." He went almost white. "What!" he asked, "both of you, or just you? Then I shall resign my position."

"But why?" we both cried together.

"Because I will have no one whose advice I can take about my orders. I know I do many things wrong. I got my training in a barrack-yard, not in a prison, and I shall never get quite used to the position here. Until now it did not matter. You helped me, smoothed over my difficulties, often dulled the edge of my commands, adapting them to our state, our mood, our company. . . . That I shall never learn. I am a soldier, not a negotiator. Very well, let someone else do it now. . . ."

"No, Schnarrenberg," said Seydlitz, "you ought not to do that. Though we shall be away . . . you still have Pod."

"Podbielski? Dragoon Podbielski?" he asked, in an indescribable tone. "Surely I cannot ask advice from that man about my orders. No," he concluded violently. "But in any case I shall not do it alone."

"Sometimes it is almost impossible to help our good Schnarrenberg," muttered Seydlitz, as he lay down. "Not a trace of elasticity . . ."

I sat down next to Pod. "I am going over to the officers' camp tomorrow," I said in a low voice.

"Well for you, my lad," he said, with great self-control. "You deserved it long ago."

"Pod," I continued, "don't be angry with me for it. Look —"

"You need not excuse yourself for it," he interposed. "It is quite clear. . . . Men are not equal and will never be. For the rest, I, with my strong body and nerves, suffer less by this life than you, for instance. And why you should suffer more than I —"

"Yes, Pod, that is all right. Nevertheless . . . if I did not

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feel that I can't hold out much longer, that I must get out as quickly as possible if I ever want to get home again, I should not leave you."

"Ensign," he broke forth, falling into his brusque manner in order to conceal his feelings, "please hold your tongue, or you will get one over the head, do you understand?"

I did not know whether to laugh or cry. "I shall often come to see you, Pod," I said quickly. "And another thing: if you want my dog, Suschka, I'll give her to you. . . ." He coughed suspiciously. "Hm," he said, "gladly. I have one at home, you know, who looks like Suschka. I once brought it back with me from leave," he continued, with striking eagerness, "Nikolaievitsch, we called him at the front. But that was too complicated for Anna. She called him Niko for short."

We were ready for marching, our bundles on our backs. Seydlitz wore Poseck's fine boots. "Well, Blank," said I, "head up and remember sometimes what I once told you." He cast down his eyes and swallowed a little. "Yes," he said weakly, "I will, Ensign. But will you come sometimes?" he continued pleadingly.

"As often as I can," I said.

Brünn scarcely stirred when I came to his bed. "Brünn," I said cordially, "do try to make a man of yourself. It will only harm you in the end if you give way so much. Remember your wife, your country. It is for our country that we are enduring all these sufferings. You will get home some time and will get your reward. But you will never get into orderly ways again if you continue to go downhill. Grit your teeth for once. . . ."

"Words are cheap, *Junker*," he said mockingly. "But of all the pack I liked you the best. I know that you mean well, and so I put up with it, but save yourself the trouble in future. I shall go to the dogs here anyway, with or without music. . . .

"Now you will be with fine gentlemen again," he continued,

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after a pause. "Well, I wish you joy of it. Send me an officer's wench sometimes, when you have one to spare. In four weeks you will not know us any more. God, what are we worth, anyway? We are going to die — with or without a priest. . . ." I bit my lips. How this man had changed, I thought, how this last year had weakened him! I was about to say something else when Pod signed to me with his eyes to leave him alone.

The leave-taking from the conjurer was short and pleasant. "I wish you everything good," he said in a lively way. "And don't forget the juggling tricks and the three best ju-jutsu motions. One never knows when they may be needed."

The two Bavarians stood with heels together in military fashion. "Why, what has taken you?" I laughed.

"Excuse us," the Tadpole began. "We often did not behave to you as we ought to have done —"

"Indeed, but why not?"

"Oh . . . because you were quite different from what an ensign usually is. . . ."

"Yes, and now?"

"Well," the Schwalangscher added, "we now wish the Ensign everything good, and ask that he will not forget the two Bavarians!"

When we first entered the room inhabited by the officers of lower rank in the German barracks, we saw nothing but a dozen iron bedsteads and as many people in field uniforms. A gunner officer, who was sitting on the bed at the door, got up at once. "You are the two new-comers from the soldiers' camp?" he asked. It was the Ensign whom I had seen when we came before, and he was evidently glad to see us. "Saltin told me about you. My name is Olfert, Ensign. . . ." He was a small but broad and heavy man with quiet movements . . . nothing young, nothing ensign-like about him. He was more like a lieutenant.

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He led us to the officer of highest rank in the room, a Lieutenant from the reserve officers called Berger, who was teaching German to a tall Turk. He cordially bade us welcome, made us put down our bundles near him, and led us from bed to bed. Eighteen men in field-grey got up and gave their names, eighteen different faces glided past us, young and old, hard and cheerful, discontented and indifferent.

" Now, gentlemen, it would be best for you to bathe first and then put on new things from head to foot," said Berger, as he called the one and only batman and told him to bring hot water from the kitchen. " Lieutenants Windt and Opitz, will you lend the gentlemen your buckets? " " Certainly . . ." said a small, thickset infantry officer with very fine hair, who we could tell was from Berlin by his accent.

The only vacant corner was near Berger, and there the servant put two large buckets of water, while Berger himself brought soap, another a hard brush, and a third a towel. The question " Who has any spare parts of uniforms? " produced stockings from one, a pair of trousers from a second, a tunic from a third, and a threadbare *litewka* from a fourth. " We will have your things boiled and frozen," said Berger. " Until then you will have to wear these. You must know," he added, smiling, " we have no lice here. . . ."

We both reddened. " Do you see? " said Seydlitz by a look. But we were greatly relieved. My God and Father in heaven, no more lice! Our hands almost trembled with joy as we drew the warm garments from our bodies. . . . The shirts could be thrown into the fire at once, as they were mere rags, brown and stiff as boards. The light of day showed that our underdrawers had neither knees nor seat — what had become of them? All the bashfulness we had lost with our old comrades awoke again among these strange, inquisitive faces. " Well, man," growled Seydlitz, " what must be, must. . . ." For heaven's sake, how our bodies looked! They were spotted brown from

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lying on hard boards, dotted red from lice bites, and covered with dirt and grey scales. The water was in a short time transformed into dingy broth.

"Boys," said fat Windt, "you will have to repeat that. Polmutzki, water! Once more. . . ." He sat down on the nearest bed and watched us cleansing ourselves as if it were a long-missed entertainment. "By thunder," he continued, "it is long since I saw such lamentable figures. By comparison, those in Germany were only wax-figure shows. Just look here, boys," he called to the room in a loud voice, "are not these a regular couple of spiders? Regular daddy-longlegs, I should call 'em. . . ."

There was no spare bedstead in the whole camp. Olfert searched for a whole day and returned at last with two Cossack sacks. "I have asked the commandant for two bedsteads for you. In the mean while you must put up with these grain-sacks. Come along now into the coffin-making shop. There are shavings there." He led us into a room where a dozen German and Austrian soldiers were carpentering. Along the wall were piled up hundreds and hundreds of coffins, plain, roughly finished boxes of eight boards, fairly smooth on the outside, quite rough within.

"We shall need them all in the spring," he said. "As no one can be buried in winter, we pile up the dead in large earthen barracks, which you may have seen at the eastern gate of our camp. Almost every day several are taken in there to be buried in the spring, as soon as the ground thaws."

We stuffed our sacks with fragrant pine-shavings and carried them back into our room. There was so little space that we could not lie down on the floor during the day and had to sleep in the passage-way at night. Though they only reached from hip to shoulder, yet for us who had lain for nearly two years on hard wooden boards, they were like spring mattresses

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upholstered with horse-hair. We had soft pillows and slept wonderfully, in spite of the scanty mattresses, and when we remembered that there were no lice to disturb our rest, we gladly put up with the half-dozen beg-bug bites which are inevitable in Russia.

Olfert advanced us a couple of roubles from our first Russian allowance, and with them we purchased a small table from the carpenters. My God, that we should own a table . . . and a couple of bedsteads on which to put our sacks. . . ! And that we should no longer need to eat off the floor or write on our knees. . . !

Was the worst behind us? I suddenly began to feel that I might hold out.

On our first walk I asked about a Colonel, a small Honved Hungarian with a typical hussar moustache, whom I had noticed. "That is Tobady," said Olfert, "a full-blooded Hungarian, a clever man. He was captured as early as 1914 and has been betting ever since, and for any amount, that we shall still be in Siberia in 1920!"

"Is he mad?" I screamed.

"On the contrary — one of the brainiest in our camp."

"Yes, but . . ." I protested. "Why, then all of us will be done for, of no more use. Who can stand lying about idle for six years? We should go home perfect ruins, aged men."

"Probably," he said calmly.

Our room-mates were men of all classes and callings. Near the door was a small rifleman, Jungmann, an acting sergeant major waiting for an officer's commission. "A war volunteer also," said Olfert when we asked about him. He was a polite, modest lad with the red mouth of a child, who always made us think of his mother when we looked at him.

Olfert's place was next to him, and Berger's opposite.

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Berger's and the Turk's beds, with a table and a space between them, made, as it were, a small private compartment.

Berger, a Doctor of Law, was a thin, fair, æsthetic fellow with the fine, nervous head of a philosopher, feminine hands, and a pleasant and tactful disposition. Over his head there hung the picture of his wife and of a very fair boy. The Turk was a tall, hot-headed fellow, called "Highness" by some because of the word which he was entitled to use after his long foreign name, which meant Prince in Turkish.

On the opposite side lived Proschow, a young aviator, the brother of a well-known ace who had been shot down on the western front. He wore his short, aviator fur coat with inimitable *chic* and was known only by the name of "the Rapid Flyer." His cap had two small dents that entranced all the youngsters, and no one else could set a cap aslant on his head so enticingly. His mouth seemed to be a few millimetres larger than his brain.

Next to him came Windt, the Berlin athlete. After three days I realized that I did not like neighbours who often spoke to one another in foul language. Neither of them had any delicacy of feeling, and the sharpness of the Berliner was returned with rudeness by the tall East Prussian.

Two or three cadet officers and sergeants followed this Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. They were, with one exception, quiet and kindly fathers of families who disturbed no one as long as they were not disturbed themselves. Punctually, at stated hours, they played their game of skat three times a day, and only on these occasions were they heard to quarrel violently.

The left corner was occupied by a young Lieutenant called Merkel, a regular officer, who seemed to copy the grey-haired Captain, the commandant of the camp, but without his qualities. With him we younger ones always felt that he would like to practise saluting with us for an hour every day for his own

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entertainment and our education. For this reason he was usually alone, and seemed to be more disliked than anyone else in the room. Behind his back he was called the "Button."

Along the short wall up to the corner were a few lieutenants in the Reserve, a teacher, two office clerks, an East Prussian farmer with an impossible name, two manufacturers, Müller, "Stone Floors," Hansen, "Paints and Varnish." In this corner controversy was incessant, and pan-German war aims clashed with democratic ideas of a world peace. The office clerks envied the merchants their possibilities of gain, and the merchants envied the clerks their life-insurance pensions. "What do you actually want?" I heard the man Hansen, known as "Paints and Varnish," say recently. "You get your money in paper bags." He frequently used this last word, though no one seemed to know exactly what it meant.

Next this corner lived two lieutenants, one of whom, Thurn, was a dark, handsome, southern-looking infantryman of an extremely amiable and obliging disposition. "A pity," remarked Seydlitz, "that *in puncto sexus* he is said to be rather objectionable." The other, Schulenburg, likewise an infantry officer from north Germany, was a fine, erect man, whom we liked best next to Berger, who seemed to be of an unusually kind disposition. He was very calm and reserved, and led this monotonous, nerve-destroying life among these different people, strictly in accordance with duty, and yet in such a way that not only his subordinates but everyone else looked up to him and respected him here as at home. Seydlitz became greatly attached to him, while I preferred Dr. Berger.

When out walking, Olfert showed me a "type" almost every day. By this name we designated the queer fellows of our camp, whose number increased every week. The barriers set up by education and culture fell with constantly increasing

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rapidity, people of rude and animal-like character associating with those of upright and pleasant dispositions.

"Look there, that is Lieutenant Stolle," he said, pointing to an Austrian whose nose looked like the beak of a vulture. "He is a gifted pianist, but he had no piano to play on, and to live three years without playing would have put an end to his art. So he made a silent piano from the boards of boxes, and now he plays from six to eight hours daily on this box. If you look at him you can see how wonderfully beautiful his face becomes at some passages. He declares that he hears every sound, having long since lost all sensation of muteness."

One morning, when I was taking a walk in the court with Olfert, I had an amusing experience. He pointed to a sentry near the gate, a real Siberian with a waving saint's beard. "Look here," he said with a laugh, "vodka is at hand in spite of all prohibitions." At this moment there stepped through a small side-door a Russian *Praportschik*, Vereniki, the adjutant of the camp-commandant, a man much feared on account of his sharp manner. We saluted smartly, he merely touching his cap. A little farther on he noticed the drinking sentry. At one bound he was in front of the petrified man, with his right hand had wrested the bottle from his mouth, and with his left the fur cap from his head. The next moment he had brought down the heavy flask with a crashing blow upon the sentry's bare head. There was a noise of crashing, liquid spurted forth, and a smell of drink arose as with a dull groan the sentry sank on his knees and lay motionless. Vereniki looked at us furiously and, with his small, exceedingly springy footsteps, went past us into the soldiers' camp. Woe to us if we had laughed!

We stood transfixed. "Did he kill him?" I at last cried. "With what?" Olfert smiled calmly. "You don't know these skulls yet, it seems. . . ."

A few minutes passed before the sentry stirred again. When

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we went up to him, he opened his eyes confusedly, breathed heavily, sniffed and grunted and rolled round on his belly, and with his long tongue easily lapped up the liquor that had dropped out of the bottle and that smelt strongly as it mingled with the desert sand. . . .

One day I met Holcking, actually Count Holcking, a Captain in my own regiment. He was in the same camp, but because he was obliged to walk with a cane and rarely went out, I had not met him before. I looked at once for his sword — it was gone, or did he perhaps not carry it out of consideration for the others? I suddenly remembered the details. Had it not been for me the most wonderful moment in the war when the old gentleman returned him his sword with a knightly bow?

"Captain," I asked hesitatingly, "Captain, do you still know me?"

He thought a little. "Yes," he said, "you were an Ensign with us, eh?" A terrible weariness made itself apparent in his words, and when he held out his hand limply, I knew that it was paralysed.

"Captain, I saw you last in the Russian divisional staff. I lay wounded in a Panje wagon when a couple of Cossack officers brought you up in a troika. An old General gave you back your sword. I heard what he said to you, Captain. It was a moment that reconciled me to many things. . . ."

"Indeed? . . ." he said in a curious tone, adding with a sneer: "It did not last long, that famous moment. . . ."

"So you have not your sword any more, Captain?" I asked quickly.

"No," he said in a low tone. "At the very next stopping-place a Cossack officer seized it, beat me twice over the head with it, and took it away with him as a war memento."

He hobbled helplessly on while I remained standing, transfixed. "So it was only a farce?" ran through my head. "A fine gesture? Nothing more?"

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I felt suddenly as if a chord had broken within me. The most secret and beautiful thing that had hitherto drowned all discords, and alone had made it possible that my experiences, in spite of all the terrible things, were resolved into a pure harmony within me. . . . Now that was gone too! Now only shrill discords vibrated in my soul — remnants of a chord that could no longer produce a full sound in me. I had no more harmony in me, I no longer rang true. . . .

A few days before, the stout Forest Commissioner, whom I had once met at Saltin's, had died. I went with a detachment of Germans to the funeral, at which an Austrian *padre* spoke some appropriate words. When we came away, I heard somebody ask: "And no one really knows of what the good old man actually died?" "He died because he had no forest . . ." somebody answered in a low tone, and, on turning round, I saw the pale Captain Behnke — a Forest Commissioner like the dead man.

A sort of "reprisal" had prevailed in our camp for a short time. On the ground that the Russian officers in Germany fared worse than we, for a fortnight we had been forbidden to leave the room after eight o'clock in the evening.

I was sitting with Saltin one night when immediately after eight I remembered the order and tried to get into my barracks in time, but was just too late. Vereniki had just ridden through the gate with a squad of Cossacks, whom he had already placed as guards at all the doors.

"That is stupid," said Saltin, "that is very stupid. It may cost you two months *katorga*, or even worse. Vereniki is a brute. . . ." "Can't I hide somewhere?" I asked. He went out, but came back at once. "He has even posted guards in the corridors. No, it is of no use and will only make matters worse. . . ."

In such cases there was nothing to be done but wait and

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trust to luck. Captain Schank did not conceal his anger. "Who knows but that all four of us will be punished?" he muttered. Saltin was vexed at this remark. "If anyone is to blame, it is I," he said, not without severity. "I will be responsible for him."

At this moment Vereniki's well-known shouting was heard in the room of the Turkish majors next door. "I'll shoot you," he said savagely, and from the words of the Turkish Major I gathered that Vereniki was, as usual, holding a pistol at his temple, finger on trigger. "I am not to blame," someone asserted solemnly. "*Starschi,* off with him! *Katorga!*" roared Vereniki.

The noise of a rumpus in the passage came nearer. The latch was hit down with the butt of a pistol, and the door was opened wide with a kick, which was Vereniki's manner of announcing his visit. He entered the room like a foaming lion — broad, massive, rocking, while three trembling soldiers stood behind him. I have never seen a Russian soldier near him who did not tremble.

"One, two, three, four — beds!" he counted shortly. "One, two, three, four, five — persons!" he roared. "Who is it that belongs somewhere else?" I stepped forward.

"Why do you disobey my orders?" he thundered at me.

"Inferiority complex" ran through my head. "I do not disobey them," I answered in Russian. "I was just leaving when your guards were stationed at the door. It was two minutes past eight."

He wanted to flame up. I stood stiffly, looking at him — perhaps not quite without fear — but looking openly into his evil face. "Cadet?" he asked suddenly in a strange tone. "Cadet?" he repeated resoundingly.

"No, Ensign!" I said shortly.

"Volunteer?"

"Yes, volunteer on the very first day."

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What was he thinking of? I could not believe my eyes when he thrust the mighty pistol with a jerk into his belt-pocket and, with a splendid gesture, held out his hand to me, a hand of steel covered with hard skin. I shook it warmly. "Come," he said brusquely.

I followed him out, and we went down the stairs side by side. In front of the barracks he paced up and down twice, silently brooding. "You have other eyes than the Germans?" he suddenly asked. "You speak a different Russian from the Germans. Whence? . . ."

"I had a Russian mother," I said in a low tone.

"And you fight against us?"

"I have a German father." He laid his hands heavily on my shoulders, looked into my eyes with the expression of an animal, then turned away and roared in his old manner: "*Starschi.*"

The *starschi* hurried up, hand to cap. "Take this gentleman to his quarters. See to it that nothing happens to him. Be courteous to him. Take care of the Cossacks, do you understand?"

"At your service, Your Excellency," and the saluting hand trembled like a leaf.

"*Do swidanje! Au revoir,*" said Vereniki.

"I thank you," said I in a low tone.

"No reason. . . ."

I went through the camp at the side of the *starschi,* who chased off with a curse a couple of Cossacks ready to receive me with their *nagaikas.* In front of my room he saluted me respectfully and hurried back with jingling spurs.

Lost in thought, I stood for a while looking after him, confusedly. "How is this possible?" I thought. "He is the first to understand my peculiar position. . . . No one else has realized that I have a special burden to carry besides a general one . . . only this man. . . ." Was this race incapable of being understood?

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One evening, when we were standing in front of our barracks, two young lieutenants passed us arm in arm. "Two lieutenants, rose-red and brown . . ." Olfert quoted. "That is a special couple," he then said mockingly. "Some of you know what that means. They are really a couple of sweethearts and blind to everything excepting themselves. They live like two turtle-doves, and neither will eat anything until he has pressed it upon the other with words as sweet as sugar. Their existence is based upon the strictest matrimonial rights and laws. . . ."

I looked after them. They were two good-looking, healthy men. "Here too?" I thought. "And not only in the upper camp?" "And when they get home?" I asked Olfert. "These two?" he laughed. "Oh, they are lost. They will never touch a woman again as long as they live. Ugh! they say even now 'a woman? How can one. . . ?'"

One day an incredible rumour ran through the camp to the effect that the Revolution had broken out in St. Petersburg. A man called Kerenski had seized the reins of government and a General of the name of Russki had forced the Czar to abdicate.

We could hardly believe it, but suppose it were true. It could not be, it was impossible. Had it not been reported a thousand times that peace was come? Was that not why we already said: "Peace has broken out again today"? But if it were actually true, would not that mean peace with Russia, and an immediate return home? Above all, would it not mean victory? Must we not conquer if the Russian front fell? If we could keep two fronts without being beaten, we must win, when one has collapsed. . . .

My God, I was quite confused. I felt I must go down and hear if any more particulars were known. In the barrack-yard men were standing around in groups. Would it be like this in case of peace? . . .

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A Jewish apothecary, who in some way always managed to get Russian newspapers, showed it to me in black and white. On the 11th of March the Government was overthrown, on the 15th the Czar abdicated.

That morning I accidentally ran into the good Saltin's arms. He drew me to him when he saw me, and his eyes, though bright, were full of tears. "Ensign," he cried, "you must come to us this evening; we are giving a *mulatschak* in the cadet-room in celebration of the Revolution. Bring Olfert and Seydlitz with you."

We went. The centre of the cadet-room, which was just like ours, had been cleared and converted into a banqueting-hall, with tables placed end to end. A Hungarian gipsy band was sitting by the wall. Their fiddles were made for the most part of box-boards, but they played them as if they were at home, sobbing and dancing at the same time. They were all Hungarian soldiers from the upper camp, but they always found a way to come down when there was a *mulatschak* — or *maydan,* as Dostoievski calls it in his *House of the Dead.*

The room began to fill. Each brought his own particular drink, which was usually mixed with Russian vodka. When Saltin saw us, he led us to seats near him and pressed a full bottle into each of our hands. "Hush, no refusal, you are my guests. Drink to our home-coming, boys. . . ."

A wild carousal followed, the gipsies played like a dozen virtuosi, and the liquor was strong and biting. When they played a *csárdás,* the Hungarian officers all began to dance. Seydlitz followed the joyous crowd with his big eyes, while Olfert only smiled, for he had seen it several times before.

The officers drank to us from all sides. Saltin had made us acquainted with some of the nicest men among them. "Home again" was the motto at this *mulatschak.* Was it any wonder that things were madder than ever before? Which of us could remain unmoved by such a motto? My bottle also was emptied before midnight; a dozen of the superior officers were already

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reeling, and obscene words were heard on all sides. An old Colonel at the head of the board was weeping aloud, and nearly all the others had tears in their eyes. Was it the news, the tremendous news in black and white which Saltin had fastened to a lamp in the centre of a board as a symbol of the feast? Or was it the music, the long-missed gipsy fiddle? God in heaven, it was both. . . .

At four o'clock in the morning the national anthems were played — first the German, then the Turkish, and lastly the Austrian. All stood to join hoarsely in the choruses. By chance I looked at Seydlitz. His face was cold and disdainful, his nostrils distended; and he was not joining in the singing.

Soon afterwards we dragged ourselves home, Olfert walking at my right, a little tipsy, Seydlitz at my left, unmoved. "Why do you look so grim, Seydlitz?" I asked gaily.

"Because our national anthem is sung by men in a drunken condition ninety-five times out of a hundred," he said in a hard tone.

The Russian officers seemed to grow younger all the time. Sometimes they were almost infants, but we saw that they did not come voluntarily. At the inspection, called *powjerka*, when we had to march by them, we were compared twice daily with a photograph that they took of us. These officers were mostly courteous and nice.

A close inspection of all rooms was held almost every month and was carried out by a very different kind of officer. They took away everything they found, books, writings, newspapers, money. For this reason everyone had some hiding-place or other, hollow legs of tables, trunks with double bottoms, small bags hung between our legs beneath our trousers. My diary was my greatest anxiety. Hitherto I had always been able to hide it, but lately an officer had discovered all the hollow places in our furniture by almost clairvoyant tapping, and he made great booty of secret writings and plans for escape. . . . I rescued my diary by a trick as simple as it was daring. I merely hung

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it out of the window on a nail below the window-sill, and when he looked out, the projecting sill prevented him from noticing that a bag swung beneath it. . . .

I went for the first time to visit my comrades. The steppe was brilliant in its first and only green, its spring of four weeks. The way to the upper camp led past the so-called "Home-hill," which rose up like a small peak in the middle of the camp, and one could look from it across the board fence into the steppe. Behind the fence, to the east, Chinese Manchuria began. And westward . . .

It was always crowded, this small mound, from spring till autumn, from morning till night. Some stood lost in thought, leaning on sticks, others crouched with crossed legs on the warm sand. Others, again, lay on their stomachs, holding their heads in their hands, and still others on their backs, looking with unmoved eyes into the clear sky. Seldom was talking to be heard on this mound, and all, excepting the sky-gazers, looked in the same direction, towards the west.

The wind swelled out their uniforms, old, shabby uniforms of German field-grey, Austrian bluish-grey, Turkish sandy-brown. Their hair waved in the wind, their lips were pressed tightly together, and the sun played on shining worn-out buttons and epaulettes, or shone on grey, haggard faces and was reflected in half a hundred eyes, wide open and full of longing.

I knew some who lived on this mound instead of in their rooms. One could see a long way beyond the fence and was less of a prisoner up there. That was probably the reason. One felt the wind that came from the west, or smelt the delicate odour of the grass that stretched out towards the west. One saw the railway tracks that led to the west, and at times a train rolling quickly towards the west. . . .

We were nearer home when we stood on this mound, and

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that is why it was called "Home-hill." From there we could imagine for a moment that we were free and alone in the middle of a wide steppe, perhaps on an exploring expedition, perhaps on a trip to the flower-houses of Nippon. . . . We saw the glittering iron ribbons which, in spite of everything, connected our desolate colony with the world, the iron rails on which we should some day roll homeward. . . .

The Cossack sentry allowed me to pass without further question on my teacher's *propusk*. In front of the soldiers' barracks were swarms of grey ants, captive men moving hither and thither, tired and limp. I went into my old home. The sour, stuffy air of the dark space almost suffocated me, although the place was empty and all the windows open. And there I had lived for six months!

From afar I could already see Schnarrenberg's resting-place, pedantically clean, and Brünn's place, disorderly and dirty. The Tadpole sat in the middle, with Suschka next to him. The other plank beds were empty. Suschka whined with joy at sight of me, and the Tadpole himself climbed down quickly with a cry of "Ensign, is it you? Now our bear will be glad."

I shook hands with him. "Where are the others, Tadpole?"

"In front of the barracks, all lying in the sun. But someone must stay here to keep watch, else our last bit would be stolen! I shall be relieved in an hour by little Blank. . . ."

Before going on I played a little with Suschka, who, to my delight, had recognized me at once. Her long hair was clean and shining and carefully curried like a horse's coat. . . .

I found all the cavalry corner at the south wall. Pod sat in the sun with nude upper body, allowing his hairy muscles to brown, and leaning his broad back against the wall between little Blank and the conjurer. Brünn and the Schwalangscher

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were stretched at his feet. Schnarrenberg, the only one with tightly buttoned-up tunic, was sitting stiffly apart.

"Lad," cried Pod joyfully, and his hands gripped my shoulders like bears' paws. His good-natured rustic face was bright and shining as I drew cigarettes from my packet and distributed them. Brünn snatched at them as one addicted to morphia snatches at the poison. "You are a good fellow, *Junker*," he muttered. "Not yet spoiled by the fine gentlemen over there; still the same, it seems to me. . . ."

"Well, Ensign," began Schnarrenberg, "all will be over soon, eh? Revolution! That is all that was wanting!" He remained silent awhile and dropped his bulldog head on his chest. "And I have to stand here aside while you go into the final fight . . ." he murmured, forgetting everything around him.

"What's in the papers?" asked Brünn. "Have they murdered all their officers?"

"No," I said. "Everything seems to have gone off practically without bloodshed."

"Pity. These torturers ought all to have been butchered, as under Robespierre, and hung up on the lamp-posts. . . ."

"Do you think that I shall be home in time for the harvest?" Pod asked in a low tone.

"I hope so, Pod. It is only May now. We are counting on our Government proposing a separate peace this very month."

"Certainly," said the conjurer. "One does not make a revolution during war if one wants to continue the war."

"Yes, now we have won," said Schnarrenberg contentedly, adding: "Could you imagine such a thing happening with us? . . ."

"No," said I, "impossible."

Little Blank burst out laughing, and he laughed so violently that he choked and coughed for a long time. "No," he said finally, "how could we imagine our Emperor . . ."

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After an hour I got up. "Will you walk with me a bit, Pod?"

"At once." He moved to my side, big and brown. We went our old way, the full round that we once had named "fight against the tuberculosis." "Well, Pod — tell me something. How are matters with you all?"

He moved his head from side to side. "Since the Revolution it is better again," he said. "Everything is a little freshened up. But before that it was very bad, fights, fornication, thieving. This damned winter . . . it would have spoiled the most decent fellows! I don't believe that we could endure a third winter. . . ."

"How is Brünn?"

"How? About the same, and doing the same as he always did. . . . But sometimes he is quite crazy. . . . For instance, when you left us, you were scarcely out of the door when he threw himself full length on his plank bed and whined like a lag-dog. . . ."

I was silent for a long time. "And Schnarrenberg?" I asked at last.

"My God, he hardly speaks to anyone now that you are gone. It is only since the Revolution that he has found his tongue again. On the first day he cried that all would soon be over and the final battle fought. It was only after someone had said that the stupid fool had better go there himself, as we had had enough of his talk, that he became tame again. However, he has resigned from his post."

"And Blank?" I asked further.

"Don't ask so many questions. . . . He has become a regular little prostitute, but he fares much better because he gets cigarettes and presents from all sides. But he will not be able to stand it much longer, I fear. I think that he coughs too much . . ."

"Ah," I thought, "so his confession that time was only the

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beginning! That was the typical way; and the end. . . ?"

"And the conjurer?" I asked with an effort.

"He is still the same. He helps everybody, but does not want help from anyone. He keeps quite fresh, does his tricks and contortions for exercise every morning — business he calls it. The Bavarians are also fine fellows. . . ."

"And you yourself?" I asked at last.

"Ah, my lad — I? If I only had a letter, I should ask for nothing more. Everyone has had something except me. Why? And then . . . I should like to do some work again, do you know . . . couldn't that be managed?"

"I have already thought of it, Pod, but I don't believe it can be done. This camp consists mostly of wounded men and such as are not fit for work. Besides, there is no farm at all about here. No labourers' trains are dispatched from here, it is too far away. But we shall soon get home now, Pod."

"Yes," he said in a low tone, "that's what keeps me up. . . . And if we got home this month, I could help Anna with the autumn sowing. . . ."

I slipped ten roubles into his pocket.

"Are you crazy?"

"Hold your tongue, old fellow!"

Then I went.

Once a month every officer in turn was allowed a steam bath. Whosoever's turn it was went down to the village with a guard from headquarters. The bath was a miserable structure of wood and pieces of rock . . . just a little room with a large stove and two or three slippery wooden steps, but excellent in effect. Water was poured out of a ladle on to the stones of the stove, which were always red-hot, and it at once atomized into steam. Two ladlefuls were endurable, three scalded one's skin and took away one's breath. One sat for a while on the first or second step until the whole body was as scarlet as a boiled lobster.

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It was not necessary to wash, for the perspiration drove every grain of dirt out of the pores. "It is called a 'Russian bath' because it saves washing and soap and work," Seydlitz once said. Old peasant women were often sitting there, and we had to wait with the guard until they went away. Notwithstanding all its advantages, it was a two-sided affair. True, we got home clean, but often brought a family of lice with us.

The best part of it was, undoubtedly, the walk. Often, as we went home, a Trans-Siberian express train rolled into the railway station and stopped to water the engine at the tower. At such times a couple of copecks and a few persuasive words usually induced my guard to accompany me to the platform to wait there until the train moved off. I generally sat on a bench and, with a peculiar pressure at my heart, silently watched the train, which in another week would be almost where my comrades were standing and where our country began. . . .

While three of us were standing in front of the barracks talking about the mentality of the Russian people, an Austrian Captain told this tale: "In my former camp we had a camp-commandant who, by order of the General, had to erect a wooden fence higher than a man round the entire camp. As soon as the inspection was over, he had it broken down again and sold all the wood — it filled several trains and was worth three hundred thousand roubles to him — to the owner of an estate. For six months all went well, but when the General came unexpectedly for a second inspection . . .

"'Where has the fence gone to, Commandant?' 'Oh, Your Excellency,' replied the gentleman, 'in spite of all my efforts, a new bit disappeared every night. The prisoners of war broke it up and gradually used it as fuel.' Denial was of no use. The whole camp was locked up in the barracks for two months, and as an extra punishment, the Commandant deducted twenty

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roubles from each of us for three months — amounting to another hundred and eighty thousand — and put them with the others into his pocket! "

Once when I stopped at the railway station on one of my expeditions to the bath, a first-class compartment of the great Trans-Siberian express stopped just in front of my bench. A servant in livery opened the door and jumped out to make purchases. Beside the open door and behind the window sat a beautiful woman. I smelt the perfume about her from the platform and saw through the open door her crossed legs, long and white as columns. She had a rather long, genuine Russian aristocratic face and a skin of ivory whiteness. Her white throat rose like a flower from her low-cut dress, and I could faintly see the narrow groove to the right and left of which her breasts rose. " My God in heaven! " I thought, trembling, " are there still such things? This perfume, this whiteness, this cleanliness . . ."

I did not know how it came about, but without intending to do so I suddenly took off my cap and said pleadingly: " Just one cigarette please. . . ."

She rose and stepped slowly to the open door. " Now," I thought, " she will call the guard to the miserable prisoner who not only stared shamefacedly at her, but even begged her for cigarettes. What a state of affairs! . . ." No, nothing of the kind. She put her hand into a box beside her, and, with a wonderfully dignified gesture signing me to approach, threw a handful of *papirossi* into my cap. I took them mutely and bowed before this strange woman, as a beggar bows — low and humbly. She did not speak a word — only looked at me softly, with unfathomable velvet eyes.

At the shrill sound of a whistle the servant hastened back, the door banged to, and the great Trans-Siberian express sped on. I stood still until the steppe had swallowed it up. In my hands were six cigarettes — La Ferme, Petrograd, the

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best brand. . . . A sudden pride shot up in me, and I went white and red in turns. "What have you done?" I railed at myself.

Then I smiled. No, I had not bowed down before an enemy. I was not a soldier, an officer, at that moment — I was only a man, a captive, and I had bowed down only to the woman as such — and to beauty. In short, to all that she meant to me. . . .

"Give me one of those cigarettes," croaked the voice of my guard.

I started violently. "No," I cried hastily, and added: "Here are others, come . . ." I put my beggar's alms carefully into my pocket and gave him four out of my own box.

Our spirits began to droop as it gradually became clearer from the apothecary's newspapers that the new Government was dependent on the Entente. Sometimes it almost seemed as if the Revolution had been instigated by the Entente solely for its own purposes. Alas! all had turned out differently from what we had wished and believed. It was not the Czarist Government that wanted to continue the war. On the contrary, the Government was tired of it and had been overthrown for that reason alone. There was no longer talk of a separate peace, since the new régime came into power.

So-called "meetings" of our guards took place daily. A civilian spoke to them on these occasions, and the guards told us afterwards that a peace was no longer to be thought of. Hold out! A new offensive! That was the motto. . . .

At Czernowitz they had actually succeeded in breaking through the German-Austrian front. We were seized by a gnawing fear of a victorious offensive instead of the expected separate peace. Dr. Berger consoled us. "This is only a prestige offensive," he said, "the last flicker. In four weeks this retreat will be made up for. . . ."

That was certain. But our hopes, our hopes? It was well that

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I had been so recently in the upper camp. I could not have faced either Pod or Schnarrenberg now.

I slept very little those nights, in spite of the fact that I now had a bedstead with two stuffed sacks, which I could spread almost like a real mattress over the entire length of the boards.

Night after night it was the same. The moon shone in through the window and made the haggard faces around me look even more angular than they were. Even Seydlitz had been uneasily rolling from side to side the last few nights. The "Warrior" with the child-mouth prattled in his sleep. Lieutenant Windt snored in spasms like an excited bull. All slept restlessly because all brains were feverish.

"Now the cannons are rolling at the front," I thought in torment, "and hundreds of thousands are making attacks, and thousands are dying at this very moment. For what? For their belief? For what belief? That wrong has been done us, that we were not barbarians, that we must defend and sacrifice ourselves! The foe is at all the frontiers, the earth is enveloped in lies in order to submerge us. I, however . . ."

I started up. A train was just running again through the station. Not a Trans-Siberian express in whose berths beautiful women were sleeping — there is fire within me when I think of my last experience — but a troop train, or one of those large American trains, which for a short time past had almost uninterruptedly been racing through from the east, from Vladivostok over Manchuria towards the west. Their cars were three times as large as the Russian ones and were travelling at high speed to the front, loaded with cannons, ammunition, arms, gas. . . .

It was not the bad reports which kept us from sleeping now, it was chiefly those trains which rumbled into our dreams, and which we had to see at every hour of the day. I was surely not the only one to lie awake, to hear the constant, monotonous

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rumbling that began again in the east almost before the last sound had died away in the west. . . .

"They ought to be told," I thought in my half-sleep, "they ought to be told. Our country ought to be told and make an end of it. You under-estimated the strength of America. She cannot be vanquished. Look at these transports by day and night, by night and day! You are no longer able to withstand it, it is in vain, it is madness!

"Make an end of it! . . ."

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1918

To continue making entries in my diary became increasingly difficult. At times my head seemed emptied of all thought and of the power to distinguish the association of ideas and events. Of certain events I could not write at all; to describe others the right words failed me. When I read through my diary, I see that the entries became gradually briefer and more concise. My writing takes on the semblance of the words uttered by a man who is becoming increasingly embittered and weaker — a man who in a short time will be too weary for speech. Indeed, the utterance of a man who not only says with difficulty and briefly what he has to say, but who has lost all pleasure in words for their own sake and in the art of conversation.

Nor was that all. My writing daily became more crabbed and illegible. I no longer had the energy to write fifty lines in succession. Moreover, by the time I had written the third line, I could no longer read the first. It was as though I were constructing a mosaic to which I could only add a tiny piece each day, and on which for four weeks at a stretch I was incapable of working. If the tiny pieces formed themselves into pictures — well and good. If not, I was incapable of altering them. I was too exhausted and hopeless. The cruel disappointment that had come to blight our hopes of peace had struck one and all of us as an ax bites into the trunk of a tree. Although the tree continues to remain green for a time, it has been mortally injured.

Is it not possible, however, that the growing infrequence and increasing brevity of the entries in my diary witness more clearly than detailed entries could have done to the extent of our degradation and depression? Is not silence at times more eloquent than speech?

Frequently we used to say among ourselves: " If an ordinary human being were placed among us for eight days, he would

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certainly think he was in an asylum!" If our life did not utterly destroy us, it was only because we were already completely blunted by all that had gone before. We no longer lived in the true sense of the word; we only waited. . . . We could best of all have been compared with the hibernant animals. Like them we were only conscious of one thing: the expectation of spring! For us spring meant — the return home.

In truth, our condition was such as to baffle description to one who had himself never experienced our lot. We became more restless and irritable with the passing of each day. The majority of us walked hourly in the barrack-yard — crossing it again and again, now lengthwise, now around the sides, forming circles, triangles, ellipses — in short, making a hundred different figures with the sole object of being tired out by evening in order to win the much-hoped-for sleep. Others sat about all day long in silence. A chance remark sufficed to arouse their fury; the paltriest occurrence to earn their frantic enmity. Former friends no longer recognized each other. Sharp-tongued criticism was rampant. No matter whether one laughed or cried, slept or awoke, whatever one did was always wrong, and no one was any longer capable of putting things to rights. Every morning a couple of officers wearing their decorations went from one house to another — all these affairs of honour were eventually to be fought out at home with deadly weapons. If that had really taken place, not a single one of us would have been left alive; for each had been challenged at least once to a duel with pistols or heavy sabres.

Days of furious irritability were succeeded by days of deathly apathy. Hopes for the future, longings for wives, children, sweethearts, the call of one's profession or work, and homesickness at times disappeared wholly and ceased to trouble us as much as the buzzing of a fly. Here and there among us a life sank into the depths, a spirit broke beneath the strain, destroyed

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by anger and the conflict with fate, eaten up with doubts about life and a gnawing fury — sank down beyond the help of all medical skill. Before one had time to be conscious of its approach, madness came to destroy in silence or in laughing, foaming frenzy all that was human in a man.

The Turkish majors invited us to visit them yesterday. Three-quarters Germanophil, one-quarter Francophil, they are decent, rather naïve men. They take their brotherhood-in-arms very seriously and ceremoniously, and they dispense hospitality in a generous and Oriental fashion. Owing to their relationship to the Mohammedan Russian Tartars, many things are open to them that are closed to us. Their religion is most certainly a permanent bond between them. Saltin informed us at the door that, in accordance with their customs, we must keep our caps on as a sign of special honour. The Turkish officers laid their hands on their hearts, mouths, and foreheads before leading us into their room. The table was laid with a strange dinner of stuffed fruits, pasties, and uncommon sweets. Afterwards we smoked cigarettes and drank Turkish coffee in which the grounds still remained. The conversation presently changed from the subject of eating and drinking to that of the war. The offensive had been brought to a standstill. Confidence reigned once more. "In a month Russia will be finished" — such was the spirit of the evening. I ventured to suggest that the Kerenski Government, as the creature of the Entente, would never dare to conclude a separate peace. "And don't forget America," I said. "Have we not heard for months past the unceasing rumble of their transport trains? I consider that the entry of America into the war is a factor of the utmost gravity. . . ."

"Since when did you belong to the manufacturers of rumours?" Lieutenant Merkel, who, as representative of the fit members of our room, had also been invited by the Turks, at once inquired.

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"I fail to understand you. When our youths are already hanging their heads . . ."

"I was a volunteer, Lieutenant!" was the answer I wished to return. But I made no reply. My God! It was now the same in every conversation. If anyone made a sensible observation or gave utterance to a sober thought, he was at once classed by men of this sort as a manufacturer of rumours, a moper, a defeatist. . . .

Captain Mustapha loudly clapped his hands. A real Bedouin from the desert, Mahut by name, who was his servant, brought the little camp newspaper, compiled by Austrian officers, hectographed, and purchasable at a subscription rate of a few copecks. The main portion was taken up with news from the front and extracts from newspapers, while the remainder was filled with the orders of the senior officers. Mustapha read it aloud word for word slowly in order to practise himself in German — a language already known to Captain Salem. At the end came a brief report of a speech delivered amidst much applause in Petrograd by a certain Lenin.

"Lenin, Lenin?" Salem exclaimed questioningly. "Have you ever heard the name, Ensign?"

"No, Lieutenant. Not before today. . . ."

At this moment Captain Roselli entered the room bearing a lute beneath his arm. "At your service, boys!" he exclaimed, as we all greeted him heartily.

"Stop! Enough of the *communiqué*. I'll sing you something." Mahut brought schnapps, and we seated ourselves. Ah! nobody in the whole of Siberia could sing more beautiful songs than this Roselli, with his dark-haired artist's head. . . .

Every Saturday we held a great bug-hunt in our room. Everything was minutely searched and dusted over with insect-powder. The wooden laths of our beds were soaked in petrol, set on fire, and left to burn until the surface was blackened,

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when water was poured over them. Up to the present that had proved the most successful of all methods, and if the fissures were then filled with liquid stearin, one had peace for practically a week. Apart from this general method of treatment, each of us had his own special way of dealing with the common enemy; methods that in addition to the destruction of the tormentors served also as a means of satisfying our stored-up hatred. "As you treat me, so will I treat you," said Windt, as he pricked the leaping bugs with one of his needles until — their bodies perforated with holes — they died an excruciating death. The Turk always kept ready a small glass dish filled with water, in the belief that in this manner they died most painfully of all. Sometimes it took two days — so he declared, as the result of experiments. The "Playful Warrior," on the other hand, set light to each bug separately. "It is so nice," he said, as a smile spread over his childish lips, "to see them slowly swell in the heat. And it sounds so pleasant when they explode. . . ."

Saltin was right. After a few weeks this life disgusted one no less than the former. Habit kills everything. Yet what else had we here? Only perhaps that we had no lice. It was no quieter in our room than in the soldiers' barracks. If indeed we had been two or three in a room, perhaps staff officers. . . . But twenty? And, in addition, to be one of the lowest in rank? A walk availed little to ease this state of things. For one was forced to salute and salute and salute, until one's arm dropped helplessly to one's side; and one left the barrack-yard through sheer inability to salute any longer. At every turn one encountered superior officers — several thousand superior officers — one almost walked upon them and knocked up against them. Worst of all was the fact that many of them were so embittered and so devitalized that no other interest in life remained to them except to watch that they were saluted

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by their inferiors in rank in strict accordance with the regulations. "I am a soldier through and through," Seydlitz once remarked, "but this is sheer folly. Is not walking thereby rendered a thing of horror for everyone? Yet nobody has the energy to abolish it. . . ." Certainly our sense of discipline was often severely tried. A few had indeed already ceased to salute. When questioned, they became sullen. In higher officer circles they were already counted among the revolutionaries — among Kerenski's "Reds" — and it so happened that among them I had a friend.

Our room received a box of newspapers and books from a Frau von Hannecken in Tientsin, and these were carefully distributed among us by Dr. Berger. I was given a couple of old newspapers, and a thick book that had been published about twenty years previously. In the newspapers I found a couple of pictures that I tore out and stuck upon the wall above my bed. One was the reproduction of a painting, "Youthful Dreams," in which a naked youth is depicted leaning against the foot of a gigantic wall of rock. Sky and water mingle before his gaze into an inseparable whole. A puny particle against the towering mass of rock, his eyes gazing far out into the unknown, he thinks and dreams. The second picture was a photograph of Rodin's statue "The Kiss." When he caught sight of the nude figures, Windt gave voice to an obscene joke. The "Playful Warrior," often spent long minutes standing before the picture; his childish mouth became still softer, and his lips opened ever so slightly. The third and last picture was of a horse, "Holsteinerin," a five-year-old Holstein brood mare out of Ceres No. 228 by Holderness III, and each time I gazed upon it I thought of my own mare Zelle, an old remount from the Z group. Beneath these pictures I sat and read. What a sensation it was to have a book in one's hand again after two years! If only it had been some other book! It was a book of

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Mantegazza's entitled *The Psychology of Pleasure.* Was not that irony?

In one corner of the barrack-yard stood a pair of home-made parallel bars. Seydlitz and I very often did exercises together on these bars. " Otherwise we should become completely rusty," he used to say, " and it is to be hoped that we shall not end our lives here."

Undoubtedly one had to think of one's body, one had to do physical jerks, but it was not wise to overdo it. Since the Revolution our food had noticeably deteriorated in quality and quantity. The rouble fell in value; the price of food rose. As we were forced to feed ourselves, and had organized ourselves for this purpose into messes of twenty men apiece, we immediately became conscious of each rise in prices. If it went further at the present rate of going . . . The Russians gave us each fifty roubles a month for everything. This sum had certainly sufficed in the previous year to purchase the chief necessities of life. But gradually . . . What did it matter to the Russian Government if ultimately one could only purchase a box of matches with the fifty roubles? Fifty roubles was the amount laid down in international agreement for captive officers — that's enough! " Buy combs, children," said Lieutenant Oehler, a broad-shouldered East Prussian, who was in charge of our kitchen, " for lousy days are ahead."

Summer had come. But the Siberian summer is as terrible as the Siberian winter. The green of the steppes had long since been burned brown, and yesterday our medical officers found the temperature in the hospital to be 48 degrees. Everyone lay exhausted on bags of shavings, the majority clothed only in a linen handkerchief. If one moved, the perspiration poured down one's body; while, to cap it all, we were weak and undernourished.

" A difference of a hundred degrees — the Devil himself

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could not hold out against that!" growled Windt, who for weeks past had gone about entirely naked. When questioned, he made an obscene reply.

"Leave him alone!" said Hansen, Lacke, and Farben. "His is the liberty of a fool."

For obvious reasons we could only drink water that had been boiled. When, however, water itself is costly and wood for the fire still more costly — ? A great many began to drink schnapps in large quantities. What could one say? If it did not avail to quench thirst or to moderate the heat, at least it sent the brain to sleep for a while; also the thoughts — those damned thoughts of home — that were often far worse to bear than thirst. For several months I still possessed the moral courage to despise the "red-noses" to be seen in our camp. Today I can understand any man who drank in Siberia. I think that if I had had more money, I should also have been found among their number.

One day, as I went to the *lafka*, a sort of canteen that stood on the boundary between the upper and lower camps, and in which many things could be purchased at outrageous prices, I caught sight of little Blank in the distance. He stood on the far side of the wire fence and gazed with wide-open eyes into the window, behind which were bread and sugar, tea and flour. When spoken to, he paid no attention. Not that he wished to buy anything, not that it was physical hunger that had turned him to stone, but the spiritual longing to handle these things once more. The past and the future had become blended together within him. I watched him for a long time without his being conscious of it. Had he not once cried out in delirium in Totzkoje: "Another pound of coffee for the lady, Frank. Certainly, madam — Guatemala, special quality?"

The thought crossed my mind that each of us was possessed by a different kind of longing. Blank's was small and paltry

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and exceedingly modest — just to be once more behind a counter was all he desired — yet no matter of what sort our desires, whether great or small, all were alike in the way in which they ravaged and consumed us. At times little Blank coughed, and each time he did so, he passed his hand across his pale lips and stole a glance at his fingers. The idea crossed my mind that Blank would never again weigh out flour and sugar.

For several days Turkish troop trains kept arriving at our camp. From one wagon six still living men were dragged forth from a heap of thirty corpses. Twelve were carried out of another, while many wagons contained only corpses. Ague.

"That's nothing new," said Dr. Berger. "In 1914 two hundred Turkish cholera cases were dispatched to a destination in closed wagons. After three weeks they reached Pensa, and only sixty men remained alive."

Müller confirmed his story: "When in '15 I lay on the station platform in Samara, two wagons arrived with their doors and windows boarded up. Everyone thought they contained food-supplies and left them standing about without troubling to investigate. When at last they were opened, they were found to contain sixty-eight Turks, of whom only eight were still alive. The wagons were run on to a siding outside the town. The frozen bodies were hacked loose with spades and thrown into a hole filled with lime."

A Slovakian Captain, who was what the Austrians call a genuine Woijak, notwithstanding the shortage of space, had been successful up to this in remaining the only man in the whole camp with a room to himself alone. So impossible was he that not a single man would voluntarily share a room with him. "The world belongs to the shameless," might with truth have been said of him. As a punishment for some complaint that had been made of him, a youthful Ensign was ordered to

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share his room. In some way or other one must listen to complaints. And if those " above " have not the energy, then those " below " have to snatch the chestnuts out of the fire.

Saltin learnt of this punishment. " Just think of it, Ensign," he said. " The poor devil knocked upon the door. ' Come in. What do you want? ' asked Captain Kosim. ' I have to report that I have been ordered by the camp-commandant to share your room, sir.' ' Indeed,' said Kosim. ' Indeed? First of all, then, open the door wide.' As the Ensign did so, Kosim rose up and struck him such a blow that he went head over heels out of the room."

" Once in a way this fellow should be given a sound thrashing," cried Windt angrily.

" What! " said Merkel, " an officer . . ."

" Yes," answered Windt quietly, " and also everyone who defends such an ' officer '! "

One morning in autumn we saw a small train standing on the rails without an engine. In the front was a second-class carriage, and behind were six or seven cattle-trucks. Glittering in the sunlight beside the door of the compartment stood a large samovar from which the smoke rose in long columns. Close beside it a tiny flag fluttered in the breeze — a red cross on a white ground.

" That is the ' Fair Angel,' " said Dr. Berger, as he turned around. " Put everything in order, boys, and clean yourselves. The ' Fair Angel ' is coming! "

" Who is she, Lieutenant? " I inquired.

" Have you never heard the name before? " answered Dr. Berger. " Through the whole of Siberia she is known by this name. She is the Swedish delegate, Elsa Brändström."

" Oh! " I said hurriedly, " I know her."

About midday she arrived in our midst. We all stood before our beds; the customarily unshaven, shaven; those who usually

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went about half naked, properly attired in their uniforms. There was no sign of dirty water; nowhere was a pair of pants to be seen hanging up to dry. Our room was so clean and orderly that it took on an unfriendly and cold atmosphere in our eyes. Accompanied by our Captain, she made the round of the room, speaking a few words with each of us and asking each what he stood in need of. The Russian officers, whose demeanour was greatly altered from what it had formerly been, remained standing by the door. As she shook Seydlitz by the hand, she said suddenly: "Haven't we met before?"

"Certainly, Sister. In Irkutsk," he replied, with a gentle laugh. "We exchanged a few kind words."

"Yes, now I remember. I was worried about you then. Hadn't you to pay for it?"

"No, Sister, not I — perhaps the lot of us. A few days later they compelled us on some threadbare excuse to run the gauntlet."

"So I heard," she said softly. "Were you the whole time in Irkutsk?"

"No," replied Seydlitz, pointing to me. "Before that we were six months in Totzkoje."

"Totzkoje!" she exclaimed. "My God!" Involuntarily she shut her eyes, and her face grew white.

"Sister," said Seydlitz, "in the upper camp there are two hundred from Totzkoje. Could not one manage to do something special for them? I don't think one of them has recovered from it. They are all still suffering as a result of having been there."

"Yes," she quickly replied, "most certainly."

As she went from one to the other, each had a different request to make of her. Dr. Berger gave her a thick letter for his wife, whom — as we all knew — he deeply loved. Windt wanted to borrow money — repayable at home, if possible. Merkel asked her how things were going on the French front. "Well,

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very well," she answered. "More than that I cannot say." Hansen, Lacke, and Farben asked whether the war would not soon be ended. "Yes," she replied, laughing, "I think this will be my last trip."

When she stood before Schulenburg and inquired what requests he had to make of her, that thin, silent man with the typical officer's profile answered briefly: "Many thanks, Sister, I have none."

As she moved round, I followed each of her steps with my eyes. How fair she was! Hope and courage returned to us all. We were undoubtedly in safe keeping, and for her there could have been no better title: the Fair Angel.

In Saltin's room hung a great map of the war-zone — a map of Europe on which tiny flags marked the fronts and positions of the troops. Black and white flags showed the German lines, black and gold the Austrian, red and white the Turks, and green and white the Bulgarians. The whole was the work of Captain Schanks, who spent days in moving the flags about in accordance with the latest *communiqués*. He was immensely proud of his work and delighted to be regarded as a strategist. Not for an instant did he ever doubt that we should win the war. Was he not in the right? If one stood before his map, there seemed to be no other possibility. How could an army that occupied vast stretches of the enemy's territory be defeated?

When an offensive was in progress, the room became a rendezvous of old soldiers weighing and arguing over the chances and wallowing in strategy and tactics. Among them was one who since 1914 had kept a record of all the prisoners reported by the Russians, and who maintained from the knowledge he had thus acquired that the Russian *communiqués* were filled with lies; thus, for example, he had calculated that the total of the prisoners reported as taken by the Russians exceeded

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the entire strength of our army. He was inordinately proud of his discovery and invariably carried the list of prisoners about with him wherever he went. Once I earned for myself the disapproval of Captain Schank by asking him, as he was in the middle of delivering a long lecture to prove that we must unquestionably be the victors in the war, whether he had ever heard of Pyrrhus' victory.

With the coming of winter another exciting rumour flew round the camp. Kerenski's Government had been overthrown. A duumvirate under Lenin and Trotski had seized the reins of power. In contradiction to Kerenski's Menshevik — that is, minority — party, the new-comers called themselves Bolsheviks — the party of the majority. Eight days later the rumour proved to have been well founded. Kerenski and his Cabinet had taken to flight. At the front the soldiers were fraternizing with one another, while the new Government was suing for peace. Their motto was: "Bread, Peace, Freedom." Everyone in our room went mad, and in the barrack-yard men embraced who had hitherto never exchanged a word. The guards threw away their rifles and went singing out of the camp arm-in-arm with our soldiers. It was said that some of the officers had already packed their kits. Although I was no church-goer, I should have liked to go that day to church.

Three days later I visited my men. In the men's barracks several had already packed up their belongings.

"Well, men, what have you got to say to this?"

"Speak!" called out Schnarrenberg.

I related all I knew.

Brünn asked: "In that case we shall be able to depart in a few weeks?" New life had entered into him and no trace was left of his violent hate for his fellow-men.

"Certainly," declared Pod, "immediately after the conclusion of peace. That is the custom by international law."

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"True," I replied. "But first of all peace must be signed."

"What!" cried Schnarrenberg. "What can these Panjes do? They'll have to sign whatever is dictated to them — that is all."

I inquired about Elsa Brändström. "That's a woman," said Pod. "They say that she has already saved hundreds of thousands of lives. We've got boots — proper leather boots, underclothes, soap, books, blankets, and Chinese coats. Here, have a look." He pulled off from his plank bed a thickly padded grey coat — far too long for him — that could serve equally well as under blanket or winter overcoat. "At last we can once more go out in winter into the fresh air."

"If only no one stole!" interrupted the girlish Blank. He coughed frequently, and beneath his eyes were blue-black rings. "That will certainly begin again. With us it is still all right, but with the others, where even clothes are stolen . . ."

"Yes," murmured Brünn, "if one were not grown up, they'd steal one's rump to make German beefsteaks!"

"What is still more," said the Tadpole, "we men from Totzkoje have all received three roubles. Perhaps, Ensign, you have a notion who was responsible for that?"

"Seydlitz," I replied.

"Seydlitz? Damnation."

"What — the aristocrat?" exclaimed Brünn. "Are there also white ravens?"

"Have you noticed our café beside the door?" interrupted Pod. "Gradually we'll get everything — a ninepins alley, a beer-shop, even a theatre will be built. A tailor has set up in our district for whom the Fair Angel fitted up his shop, and yesterday he festively opened his business with the aid of a bottle of schnapps. A cobbler will be the next to come. We have already three barbers. Yet what's the use of it all as long as we have no money?"

"Let's go and have a look at the pub and drink a beer, Pod?" I asked suddenly.

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"Beer?" he questioned scornfully. "There's only kvass."

"Well, then, kvass."

The "pub" was an unused plank bed that had been converted into a table. Round about stood roughly hewn benches, while in the corner on a small stove stood an old kettle from which came an appetizing odour. A tubby sergeant, formerly a cook's boy, came forward in a white-grey apron.

"What can one have, mine host?"

"Kvass, coffee, sausages, goulash . . ."

"Splendid! Hopphopphopp?" cried Pod, as his face brightened. "And even a bow-wow, eh?"

"Shut your ears, Pod," I said, taking the innkeeper on one side and whispering in his ear. "Give this man a portion of goulash every second evening, do you understand? I'll pay for a month in advance. How much is it?"

"What are you doing, youngster?" asked Pod suspiciously.

"Nothing, nothing. I am only composing our menu. Tell me — has the post not yet arrived?"

"No, devil take it. And I am sure that Anna has written. . . ."

We chattered until twilight fell. "There is no longer any boundary between the camps, Pod," I said in conclusion. "For the Bolsheviks everything and everyone is equal. If you should happen to want anything from me . . . ?"

"Man alive! What should I do down there?" he replied anxiously. "In these clothes? If a button is missing from my uniform, I must pay for it with an hour's drill. No, you come along up here!"

Our commandant, Vereniki, refused to recognize the new Government. Together with the officers and some of the troopers of our former convoy, he resolved to offer armed resistance.

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From early dawn one day we heard the rumble of cannon. Everyone stood at the windows and gazed in anxiety toward the west. Windt, who had just come in, reported: "He has taken up his position with his troops behind the cemetery hill."

The first train load of Bolsheviks arrived at ten o'clock, only to be followed quickly by a second and third — all throwing menacing clouds of thick smoke behind them. While the cattle-trucks were filled with troops, the muzzles of cannon peered out from the uncovered wagons. Almost simultaneously with the arrival of the train, three hundred cavalry trotted on the right and left of the railway lines into the village. They were mounted on tall, lively horses, armed to the teeth, and red stars blazed from out their high woollen caps. The place was soon alive with soldiers, who sprang from the wagons and, directed by a couple of cavalrymen, ran quickly across the rails to the camp carrying spades and axes, with which, with resounding blows, they levelled the fence in front of the centre barracks and then formed themselves into a thin line in its place.

"It looks as if they want to dig their trenches right in front of our windows," remarked Dr. Berger.

"Ah well, that'll be lively, damn it!" said the airman, Proschow.

I went into the village with Seydlitz. Guns were being unloaded and limbered up. Teams of four horses were then attached to the limbers, and the guns galloped off amidst much noise towards the east. There was no trace of any real authority, and they seemed more like a band of freebooters than a body of troops. Nearly everyone yelled and cursed and quarrelled. Their leaders — young men with clever faces — addressed them in friendly fashion, although at the same time they gazed far beyond them as if they saw a goal ahead in the far distance with which all this had nothing whatever to do.

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For a time we remained standing, while Seydlitz watched the passing troops with cold and contemptuous eyes. Some of them were drunk; their fur caps were stuck on the backs of their heads and suddenly, to the accompaniment of a loud singsong, they began to dance madly. "A band of robbers!" said Seydlitz at last. "A squadron under Holcking would drive them into the Baikal."

Three middle-aged officers stood in front of our barracks. They appeared to be former non-commissioned officers of artillery and acted as if there were no prisoners of war present, argued at length, and finally, although still only half agreed among themselves, gave orders to a battery to take up its position. The guns dashed noisily past the houses and turned and twisted in the barracks-squares. The long gun-carriages were concealed behind the protection and shadow of the red walls, the guns cleared for action.

That afternoon our Captain, accompanied by Colonel von Strann, the senior of the Austrian officers, walked through the camp. Beside them walked two Bolshevik officers.

"Halt, Ensign!" he called to me from a distance.

"What do you want, sir?"

"The interpreter is ill. I understand you know Russian. The new commandant wants to give us his orders. Here is some paper. Please write down whatever he says."

"You understand Russian?" asked the commandant, a young stripling with a clever but wild face. "Good. Write as follows: 'Whoever supports the White troops will be shot.' Have you got that? 'Whoever gives information to the White troops will be shot.' Have you got that? 'Whoever among the prisoners of war will enter our ranks at once becomes a free Russian citizen and will be given pay and arms'—have you also got that?—'like our soldiers. Commandant Pastuchow.' Finished?"

At this moment a couple of cavalrymen came in with their

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first prisoner — a young officer of Vereniki's who had been caught on reconnaissance. He was brought before the commandant, and the two men eyed each other. For several seconds a stream of hatred passed from one pair of eyes to the other as the current passes between two poles overcharged with electricity.

"If you will tell us all, you will only be shot," I heard the commandant say. "If not — tortured until you speak!"

"What do you want to know?" asked the officer, a young Cossack Ensign. The yellow stripes on his trousers seemed like flames, so bright were they.

"Who is your commander?" asked the commandant.

"God!" replied the Ensign in a voice filled with reverence.

"Are you scoffing at me, dog?" foamed the commandant, raising his hand, between the fingers of which the butt of a heavy pistol peeped forth, and striking the Ensign between the eyes in a fit of terrible fury. We crept away.

"And those are brothers?" murmured Seydlitz. "The sons of one race? . . ."

Two new words were firmly fixed in our minds — two new ideas: White and Red. For the first time we experienced a foretaste of the terror that was about to burst forth over Russia.

Another day I met Schnarrenberg once more filled with optimism. He said the Russian swine were done for; that now it was the turn of the French *poilus;* and that we should yet march in triumph through the Brandenburger Tor. As we conversed, it happened that we were standing by the mortuary; a pure chance — and yet . . . A certain undertone in his voice aroused my anger, and I said: "I have also met Holcking."

"Count Holcking — to whom the Russian General returned his sword? Damnation! That was a deed! And still people say that war lacks nobility. War — "

"Yes," I interrupted, "just behind the front another officer

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took away his sword again and with it hit the almost dying man several blows across the head." Schnarrenberg bit his lips, and his stern face worked convulsively. "If I were you, Schnarrenberg," I said coldly, "I shouldn't tell that story quite so frequently. There was nothing noble about it. It was only a farce, a fine gesture, nothing more. . . ."

For a while we were well treated by our new rulers. Sentries disappeared, and officers and men were no longer separated from each other. In the eyes of the Bolsheviks, all were equal — so it was said throughout the camp. We could go wherever we liked, with the solitary exception of the railway station, but that sufficed to render us prisoners as before. To take to flight across the steppes would have been sheer madness. Before the first night had passed away, one would have been frozen to death or devoured by wolves. Ah! these Bolsheviks were cleverer than their Czarist or Kerenskian predecessors. For they achieved the same result by their orders, only at a lesser cost to themselves. Not, indeed, that we regarded them with enmity. All that we had heard of them — their intellectual views, Oriental ideology, boundless brutality — made them appear strange and incomprehensible to our eyes; yet they had given us more liberty and so caused us to regard them with tolerance.

The hill on which the camp stood rose up solitary in the midst of the plain. We walked in all directions across the steppe, or down into the village. It was a joy to walk across the steppe — to walk with light, free paces across a plain over which eyes that had for years past been hemmed in by high fences could once more gaze into far distances. The village was an even greater joy. Our starved gaze surfeited itself on the exiles who had settled there, on the Chinese coolies with their slit-eyes, and on the Burjaten nomads and Manchurian tea-caravans with their pompous camels.

At the entrance to the village stood the inn. After the

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November Revolution it was always full. A small and dirty Chinese boy served as waiter. Tea and fish and meat were to be had, and we frequently ate *baranina* — mutton roasted on a spit. For weeks past our mess had no longer been able to serve us with meat. On my first visit to the inn I gobbled up half a leg of mutton, and, as I ate, I thought: "I must come here once with Pod!"

At the farthest end of the village, in the poor Chinese quarter, an opium den was to be found. Now and again one of us was to be seen vanishing through its dark entrance. I was told that Lieutenant Thurn recently spent a whole day there, and that he returned with dull and vacant eyes, but for two days his face bore the impress of an indescribable beauty. "A new and even greater danger for us," said Dr. Berger, "than the old dangers."

Women were also to be found in the homesteads higher up. "They're only peasant girls," said Windt shortly, "but they know what copulation means." On his small and bald head, which could be descried from afar, and which was filled with impudent thoughts, were several suspicious scratches.

"They've already sent a Russian to Tschita," said Merkel, as though he were relating a matter of daily occurrence, "for the purpose of bringing back something worth while."

"Do you know, Ensign," said Dr. Berger in an aside, "that Asiatic syphilis is the most terrible of all venereal diseases?"

"No, Lieutenant."

"It is said to be specially common in Transbaikalia," he added lightly.

I looked at him. He was once more plunged in his book. He looked as though he had not opened his lips. I understood.

A number of officers with artistic leanings, influenced and aided by our newly won freedom, turned a barrack unsuited for living purposes into a theatre. As the result of an appeal, it be-

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came evident that we possessed among us the necessary artists — singers, stage managers, actors, and scene-painters. For a month everyone worked with feverish energy. Costumes were prepared from old uniforms, unused sheets, and sandbags and painted and decorated with colours obtained from multi-coloured papers. Newspapers fastened one above another and painted with paint made out of all possible substances furnished the scenery. The female roles were assigned to young lieutenants and ensigns of an especially girlish and seductive appearance. The opening night was a very special occasion. Our officers' orchestra — whose instruments came for the most part from the "Fair Angel" and a charming German sister, Fräulein von Walsleben — conducted by a Viennese conductor — little Lieutenant Hollisch — performed an operetta. The actors were overwhelmed with unending applause, while the principal "girl" — ravishing in his woman's clothes — became the centre of a furious fight.

"She has received so many offers," said Windt, "that she has been forced to ask for military protection."

Greatly encouraged by this success, our actor-manager proposed to stage a well-known operetta. Lieutenant Blau, who was a genius in a small way, was ready to write down the score from memory.

As we sat at mess on the following evening, a small Austrian Lieutenant unexpectedly appeared in the doorway. At once I noticed his peculiar appearance, as of one who walked in his sleep. He used to stand for hours in one place in the barrack-yard as though listening to something. I had often seen him standing thus and had never been able to explain his conduct to myself. Dr. Berger rose and went towards him.

"What do you want, Lieutenant?" he asked in a friendly way.

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger, "but I heard voices

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here. Is my wife here? I heard her speak to my daughter — most certainly in this room. There! she calls me by name. Don't you hear anything? "

Dr. Berger grew pale. "You are mistaken," he said wearily. "I hear nothing."

"There!" cried the Lieutenant. "There — just now! Keep quiet! Listen! You must put your hands to your ears — thus — do you see?" Suddenly he laughed. "There! she has just called 'George,' don't you hear? It was quite clear — '*George.*'" His hands dropped from his ears, and he looked inquiringly around the room. "Only I can't find her, I can't find her!" he said helplessly. "You have good sight, Lieutenant, you cannot deny it. Tell me! Everyone hides her from me — naturally, they are envious; that I can easily understand. Nobody has a wife here except myself. But I won't be played with any longer — won't look about any longer."

Windt came forward. A few, fearing his tactlessness, sought to intervene. He motioned them away. "Yes," he said cheerfully, placing his hands to his ears in the same manner as the Austrian Lieutenant, "I hear it also. But it is not here. It must be in the next room among your own fellows."

"Am I really mistaken?" asked the little Lieutenant with a note in his voice that pierced our hearts like a knife.

"I am certain — "

"No!" he cried out. "You only want to send me into the next room again. Oh, I know it! You always play the same game with me. I am always forced to wander about — wander about. But it's no longer a game." Once more he suddenly became silent, his head slightly on one side, and his hands held funnel-shape to his ears. After a pause he whispered: "Or — or did I really deceive myself? Is it perhaps in the next room?"

"Wait a moment!" said Windt quickly. "I hear something. Aren't you called *George?*"

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"Yes," he murmured. "I'm George. Yes, I am." A laugh spread over his good-natured countenance, and a flicker began to show in his eyes that looked through and beyond men and buildings. With his hands held to his ears, he hurried out into the passage. The door stood open behind him, and we heard him ask the same question in the next room that he had addressed to us on entering ours. Nobody spoke.

"I have no appetite left," said Proschow loudly. "Damnation!"

"Don't you know him, Doctor?" asked Windt quietly. "Have you not heard about him? His name is Köhler, and for months past he does nothing but wander from one room to another. One can only get him out of a room in the same way that I did. It is the only way, even if it is not nice."

At the beginning of winter our "university" once more opened its doors. With our camp-stools in our hands, Dr. Berger and I went almost daily to the "lecture-room," which was always full — mainly with the younger men — and contained a table and reading-stand. Almost every subject could be studied, and, as the bald-headed Windt remarked, "only a chemical laboratory was missing." Since there were representatives of nearly all the faculties among those from the Reserve officers who had been taken prisoners, it was actually possible to learn the same subjects as were at that time being learnt by students at home. The lecturers were mainly university professors and lecturers. Professor Dr. Kowarcsik, for example, lectured on natural history; Professor Dr. Melzer on the history of art and on ancient languages; Professor Dr. Hillberg on modern languages and philosophy; Dr. Bauer on literature; Dr. Dofat on journalism; Dr. Blau on anatomy; Dr. Schmidt on political economy; and Staff-Captain Möhring on tactics and strategy.

In the "university," however, there happened what had

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so often happened before in our camp in other directions. The spirit was indeed willing, but the flesh often proved weak. Too often the words of the lecturer rang in our ears like empty sounds, only occasionally did they clothe themselves in the guise of actual and recognizable ideas. We were too blunted, too tired, too used up to take in what they were intended to convey to our brains. Nevertheless we refused to give in. Each day the contest was resumed anew. If Dr. Berger had not invariably taken me with him, I should much sooner have ceased to attend. Each time he exercised anew a compulsion that could scarcely be felt, while through weakness I was incapable of resisting him.

"Down below, Ensign," said Lieutenant Merkel, "a frightful fellow, lousy and dirty as a Russian, asked me about you. He'd lost absolutely all idea of how an officer should be addressed. Just take this opportunity to teach him once for all."

"Certainly, Lieutenant," I said aloud. Then I added in an undertone: "God help me!" I went outside. Could it be anyone else except Pod? It was Pod. With his long beard and flowing Chinese robe, he looked like a modern Wandering Jew.

"Hello, Pod, old boy," I called out. "What's up?"

"I've got a letter! My first! From Anna!"

"How is she?"

"Splendid! My best plough-horse, Blesse, has foaled twice — each time a filly. That means there's more to come! At the time she wrote, potatoes were coming up in the rye-fields. Little George is already old enough to drive the cows in from pasture — and is a proper scamp, like his father! But . . ."

"Yes, Pod?"

"Yes," he went on, "there's nothing to be done — this damned war! They've commandeered our best horse, Ajax, the one we always drove to church with on Sundays. The dragoons have got him."

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I gave a sigh of relief. "That's not so bad, Pod," I said consolingly. "He'll be kept at the base, won't he? But we must celebrate this letter and also your Anna, mustn't we? There's a pub in the village where one gets other things besides horse goulash."

He shook his head. "If on our return you don't come immediately to my farm, my boy," he said sadly, "to fatten yourself up for half a year on bacon and sausages — "

"I promise you, Pod."

We went off together, but after we had taken a couple of steps, he suddenly stood still. "*Junker,*" he said timidly, "I'd like to see what sort of quarters you've got. Can I? "

"Of course, Pod. Naturally."

We turned about and went back to my room. Nearly everyone was there. Fifteen pairs of eyes gazed upon us with curiosity. For a time Pod stood with heels well apart. "Dragoon Podbielski asks leave to enter," he said in a soldierly tone.

"Yes, yes," said Dr. Berger. "Come along in."

"Hello, Methuselah! " laughed Windt.

"This is Pod, Doctor," I said, as I pushed him forward. "He wants to see for himself how I am housed."

Berger laughed. "By all means. Make yourself at home," he said. "Here are three cigarettes, Pod. The Ensign has already told me about you."

We sat for a while on the bed. Pod smoked hard. "Man," he finally said, "I had never thought it could be so clean! And the good air. . . . You've certainly got no lice here, eh? Not a single one? "

"No, Pod."

"Is it possible? And pictures, boy? And a table . . ."

"Should you also like one, Pod? "

"No! " he said gruffly. "Shut up! "

His big doglike eyes remained fixed on my largest picture. "Desire — of — Youth! " he spelled out the title slowly

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letter by letter. "Yes, boy," he said softly, "that's something for you . . . and for our time." Suddenly his gaze passed to the second picture. He drew himself up and read: "The Kiss." For a while he remained silent before he started to speak very softly, and as if to himself: "You don't yet know what a woman is, boy. . . . I know, although I had almost forgotten. Oh! a woman is everything and can be everything. She ruffles your hair — and all is well again. She draws your head to rest between her breasts — and everything is forgotten. She's soft and warm — all that is not to be found here. Worry is at an end if you have got a true woman — and all despondency. When she lies contented in your arms, life holds nothing more. Nothing more can happen to you — nothing. You know once again who you are, where you are, and where you belong."

An hour later we went into the village. *Baranina* was to be had, and Pod devoured a whole leg of mutton. "Ah, boy," he suddenly said in his old voice, "this food and that letter — God knows there are good days even in Siberia!"

I had hardly got back before Lieutenant Merkel — the "Button" — came up to my bed. "I want to draw your attention to the fact that it is not desired that soldiers should visit your room," he said softly, but sharply. A sudden fury arose in me at the sight of his empty face and cold fish's eyes.

"Why not?" I answered.

"Why not?" he replied stiffly. "Since when has it been customary for a lieutenant to have to give his reasons to an ensign for making a demand of him? Are you quite mad, sir? I refuse to be treated as a civilian! Moreover, it is enough to make anyone angry that you should permit yourself to be on such terms of friendship with common soldiers. It is intolerable, sir! We do not desire to see your friends any more. Nor to hear any more of them!"

I gazed at him with fury in my eyes. Something boiled up

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in me. But I was a soldier — and I knew the futility of argument. "Damned brute!" I thought quietly. He went off to bed.

Scarcely had he reached his own bed again before Dr. Berger came over to me. "Don't let this give you any grey hairs, Ensign," he said laughingly. "And let your friends come as often as they want to. Lieutenant Merkel doesn't speak for all of us. He speaks only *in pluralis majestatis!*"

"Yes, Lieutenant," I said — and a lump rose in my throat. "No," I thought to myself, "he doesn't speak for everybody. Are there not many who think like Berger?"

"If one's going mad," said little Windt in a loud voice directed towards Merkel's corner, "it begins in the head — especially when there's not much in it!" It seemed as though he wanted to emphasize my very thoughts. No sooner had he finished speaking than Lieutenant Schulenburg — a thin, silent regular officer — raised his voice. "Lieutenant Merkel," he said bitingly, "I am the senior regular officer here, and I am glad that the Ensign, in the special circumstances now prevailing, maintains so splendid a relationship with the men from his regiment. In future, follow his example! I particularly desire it."

As I lay down in bed, I saw a fat louse crawling across my blanket. I captured him and, in order that nobody should hear it, I pressed the breath out of him beneath my bed-clothes. "Ah!" thought I, "Pod left behind a small remembrance of himself."

In November the Bolshevik Government appealed to the Central Empires for an armistice. An armistice is the first step towards the conclusion of peace, is it not? Or was this announcement in the newspapers only fabricated by the new Government for the purpose of currying favour with the war-sick Russian nation? When three weeks later a telegram reached the commandant with the news that the armistice had been

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signed, we could not but believe it. It is difficult not to believe that which one has desired ardently for many years. Dr. Berger delivered a short speech that evening in which he exhorted us as follows: "Now let's hold out. Let's never forget that we are here in the service of the Fatherland. And let's bear our cruel fate bravely and honourably and silently to the end out of love for our Fatherland and our nation." As his voice ceased, a couple of officers began to sing *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles.* Seydlitz joined in and sang with all his might and main. Morning had dawned before we separated. Everyone believed that it could only be a matter of weeks. A *Te Deum* was arranged for the following day. I went.

Windt said: "War and deceit are alike. One must never let oneself be caught out in a deception, and one must never lose a war. When all goes well, everything is well and well done. When things go wrong, then everybody starts to talk until the crash comes."

The Emperor's birthday was due to come round in a few days' time. It was resolved to celebrate it this year with quite exceptional solemnity. Captain Mittelberg came to discuss the program with the senior officers in our room. The officers' choir was to sing, the officers' orchestra to play. Dr. Berger was detailed to preach the sermon, read the service, and give the absolution. Our Captain was to propose the Emperor's health. "Well, gentlemen," he said finally. "We must now levy another small tax in order to be able to give our guests a more or less suitable dinner."

"And tomorrow there will be *kascha!*" murmured Windt.

"What did you say, Lieutenant Windt?"

"Nothing, Captain!"

The tiny incident served to recall what had occurred at a meeting held by the Austrian officers to make preparations for celebrating the birthday of the Emperor Karl. Among them

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were many who were plastered with decorations, although they had never once heard the whistling of a bullet, and when the Colonel reminded the assembled officers that as a matter of course all decorations must be worn, a Captain called out sharply: "Naturally. But in that case I beg to propose that all decorations acquired behind the lines should be worn on the back of the recipient!"

The banquet began. Our beds were piled up in the passage, and ensigns were detailed to act as sentries. The tables of the German officers were placed together to form one long table. Our Captain was seated at the head of the table and was far too conscious of his own importance. On his right and left were seated the officers of the allied armies — Austrian and Hungarian colonels and Turkish majors. The menu consisted of a vegetable soup, beef served with dumplings, and bilberry tarts. "For this," said Windt gruffly, as he ate enough for three, "we shall have to take in our trouser-buckles for a month to come, like a woman without corsets!" Schnapps followed in rivers. An East Prussian, Proschow, who had Russian blood in his veins, had succeeded after many experiments in concocting an "Emperor's liqueur" that was not at all bad.

When on the evening before the banquet Seydlitz came past his "distillery," he said contemptuously: "Schnapps here, my friends! We want once in a way to be patriotic!" Cheeks gradually grew redder and eyes became glazed as glass followed glass of this powerful vodka. As ten o'clock struck, silence fell upon the noisy company. Our Captain rose and cast a piercing glance at Proschow, who continued to yell without taking any notice of him.

"Gentlemen!" said Mittelberg, as though he commanded a battalion, "although we stand today in a strange land twelve thousand kilometres distant from our own and from the places in which is being celebrated the greatest of our

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national commemorations, nevertheless our hearts are no less filled than are hearts at home with the same emotion: loyalty to our country and our Emperor — loyalty unto death!" He went on to add that, although we no longer fought with weapons, yet our sacrifices were no less worthy of admiration than those of our comrades at the front; and in his peroration he spoke of speedy victory and a triumphal return home beneath the eyes of the Emperor. "And now, gentlemen," he ended, "rise, lift your glasses, and join with me as one man in the toast: Our supreme war-lord, His Majesty —"

At this very moment the door was timidly thrown open, and on the threshold stood — Lieutenant Köhler! "Ah!" he said nervously, in the midst of a deathly silence. "Pardon me, gentlemen! You are holding a celebration? I only want to ask: Is my wife here? And my little daughter? I distinctly heard their voices."

The best hated of all were men of the "Button" type who, on the occasion of each victory, opened their mouths to give vent to tactless remarks about "a damned good licking." The majority of us had suffered too much to be able to comprehend this sort of warlike enthusiasm. A nation must certainly be valiant and capable of defending itself; we should be ready to do our duty once again and would not forget it even here. One thing, however, had become too deeply impressed upon us for us ever to forget it: that war is something far too terrible to be talked about in a boasting and light-hearted manner. For us it seemed only natural that every civilized man should regard it as his first duty to do everything in his power to prevent war. When one of these "Buttons" once spoke to Dr. Berger in this boastful way, the Doctor replied: "I believe we are living in the twentieth century, Captain? Besides, I am a lawyer — a servant of Right and not of Might!"

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When it was barely light, we were awakened one morning by a wild thundering of hoofs. We dashed to the windows to behold patrols riding in from every side. The broad trench before our door in a few minutes resembled a seething nest of scorpions.

"The charm is broken!" cried Windt.

Half an hour later the first line of infantry appeared in very open formation, only to be followed at brief intervals by a second, third, fourth, fifth. . . . The Red sentries seemed to have lost confidence; their boastfulness disappeared like snow before the south wind. Their officers gazed through their field-glasses with anxious expressions and close-shut lips.

"The seventh, eighth, now the ninth — devil take it!" I overheard a couple of Red sentries cursing. A window broke with a sharp crack. The first shell from the field-batteries came whining between the barracks, to burst in a high geyser of flame in the sand directly in front of the first line of trenches. "Open fire!" called a non-commissioned officer, as he ran down to the battery. Volley after volley rang out; the spaces between the houses resembled mouths belching forth flames, heat, and brimstone. The barracks trembled ceaselessly, the floors of the rooms swayed, furniture and bedsteads creaked and shook, and the smoke of the artillery bombardment swirled acridly in through the broken window. The champion mare "Holsteinerin" fell from the wall and broke a leg.

The mass of attacking troops in the distance came nearer and — ably officered — dashed through the fire zone. They continued to advance in a series of dashes, which tended to become shorter and shorter; and they opened up a cool and well-directed covering fire. One after another the bullets came flying through our window. For a while we lay flat upon the floor, then soon afterwards sprang up once more to keep a look-out. The stone breastworks of the trenches in which the defenders stood proved far more dangerous to them than did

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lying out upon the open steppe to the attackers. Nearly every bullet ripped knife-like splinters from the blocks of stone and sent them showering into the air like swirls of shrapnel, and so each found two and three targets instead of one. Every man that fell looked as though he had been slashed with knives.

Directly beneath our window an officer stood beside a machine-gun which blazed unceasingly, jumped backwards and forwards and sideways, and barked like a mad dog. After a time the gunner sank down over his gun, which then ceased to fire. At the same instant the commandant seized him and threw him with inconceivable strength upon the parapet to act as a sand-bag to stop bullets. He shrieked for a while. All the corpses were thrown up to form a parapet to shelter the firing line. Presently the storm of projectiles died away. Only here and there did a heavy body quiver. Heads and arms that had been torn away by shells lay scattered around.

"Why are they still lying there, the attackers?" whispered Seydlitz. "Two big dashes would land them in the trenches."

It certainly seemed as though the attacking swarms were unwilling to leave their covering to make an attack. Or were they perhaps waiting for the arrival of a prearranged moment?

At this instant a fiendish Cossack "Hurrah" burst forth from behind the barracks, to the accompaniment of the clatter of innumerable horses' hoofs. I noticed that the commandant sprang backwards and gazed towards the rear with fury in his eyes. Half a dozen of us dashed into the passage in order to be able to take a look in the direction from which the hurrahs were coming.

"Good heavens! What a picture!" cried Olfert. Two, three, four regiments of Cossacks galloped out of the village, standing in their stirrups, led by a surprising number of officers, and swept with phantom-like swiftness over the intervening space, to pour like a brown flood between the barracks. Two

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teams were able to turn their guns upon the oncoming Cossacks. Their first shots cracked plaintively forth, aimed far too high, and the very next instant the Cossacks were upon them. They cut down the gunners, rode on, and reached the trenches from behind at the same moment as the infantry, who, on hearing the sound of the first hurrah of the oncoming attack, had abandoned their position, advanced at a rush, and sprung over the parapet from in front. Not a single man of the defenders escaped. A few defended themselves to the death. A number surrendered their arms with loud entreaties for mercy.

Against the wall beneath our window they placed seven disarmed and severely wounded officers. In their midst stood the commandant. A tall handsome officer approached him. In his right hand he carried a heavy whip on the end of which dangled small leaden balls. A short and sharp interrogatory began. Six of the prisoners listlessly answered his questions, but the youthful commandant made a contemptuous gesture and spat upon the ground at his feet.

"Drag him to death!" said the officer, in a relentless and level voice, bringing as he spoke his heavy whip twice and thrice down across his face. The commandant doubled up and shrieked. Six Transbaikal Cossacks tied his legs with long straps to the tails of two prancing Cossack horses. The officer watched their work critically. "Well done, boys!" he laughed. "Now away with you for an hour." They sprang into their saddles and rode with loud cries out across the steppe. The slender body of the commandant bumped up and down, tore itself to pieces on the jagged stones, and left behind a broad trail of blood.

Two hours later the Captain's adjutant came and said: "The interpreter is still ill. You must come along with me at once. The new commandant wishes to give orders to our senior officers." We hastened off together to find all the senior officers

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gathered around Colonel von Strann. Nobody spoke. We had barely reported ourselves and saluted when somebody pressed down the latch from without and kicked the door wide open with his foot. Did we not know him? Of course. It was Vereniki, dusty, perspiring, and carrying his pistol as always with the butt projecting from his hand.

"We know each other, gentlemen, do we not?" he asked gruffly. I stepped forward.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "you, Ensign?" I saluted him stiffly. He held out his hand. "Have you paper and a pen?" A second officer entered. It was the officer who had interrogated the prisoners.

"Attention! The Ataman Semjonoff is coming!" he called out, and he took up his position by the door with his hand at the salute. Everyone stood to attention. The Ataman of the Siberian Cossacks, Lieutenant-General Semjonoff, entered the room with long and ponderous strides. A tall and powerful man, muscular and imposing appearance, he was clad in the Mongolian-Burjatischer uniform. A fur-trimmed cloak hung from his broad shoulders, and from the back of his head rose a low, broad Cossack *papacha.*

I regarded him with curiosity, thinking excitedly to myself: "So that is the world-famous Ataman!" His face was smooth, and each muscle looked as though it were carved out of stone; his forehead was high, his chin powerful and prominent, and his nose of the true Russian type — broad and thick. A black moustache covered his upper lip; the lower protruded ever so slightly. Two large grey, piercing eyes, set in deep cavities, combined with his stiff and heavy bearing to give the impression of inexhaustible strength, calmness, decision, and self-confidence. "Gentlemen," he said in a deep and resonant voice, after he had briefly acknowledged our salute, "it is necessary for me to inform you that with my arrival this camp comes once more under the administration of the old Russian

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Government. Hence all concessions that have been made to you by the Red usurpers are removed, and precisely the same state of things is restored that existed here before the Revolution. Since I do not recognize the peace negotiations at Brest Litovsk and therefore consider myself to be still at war with your countries, you are once more my prisoners of war. In your own interest I advise you to pay particular attention to these facts."

"Attention!" Vereniki called out.

Again Semjonoff raised his broad hand — and went.

Thus we began to live under the rule of the Whites — a régime almost indistinguishable from that of the Czarist Government. Indeed, the only difference was that we had no longer anything to eat. Famine had broken out in some districts as a result of the fighting and consequent destruction. With whom does one first begin to economize? With prisoners of war. An animal is valuable; an animal can work; and, in dire necessity, it can be slaughtered. Hence an animal must be fed as long as possible. A prisoner of war has less worth than an animal. . . . The Kerenski currency daily fell in value. Finally we could only buy black *kascha* without fat, or meat that had been cooked in water. Sentries stood once more before the village. Sentries stood once more before the steppe. The old life had returned. The Home-hill regained its importance. Spring came — and the news that the peace of Brest Litovsk had been signed. What about us? Had we not awaited this day for years? Had we not through all these years pictured its coming? Painted it in lively and joyous colours? And now we hesitated to say that peace had really been concluded. . . . How differently everything had turned out! Our depression baffled description. My God! What had we done? All who were in European Russia were going home. But we in Siberia. . . .

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"We must make a longer stay," said Windt sarcastically, "because we have had a better time!"

Seydlitz asked me to teach him Russian. "This counter-revolution can last for years!" he said in his common-sense way.

No! No! How could we survive that? Were not all conventions already disappearing from our room? What about the soldiers? What about Pod? We lived in an atmosphere that baffled description. Have men ever experienced anything more terrifying? Peace. . . . Peace. . . . But for us no peace? . . .

Since the funerals started again, we have made a habit of accompanying each to the cemetery; for this was the sole way in which we could get out from behind the barbed wire. Attendance at funerals was officially permitted. Pleasant it was certainly not, but at the least one felt a few yards of open steppe beneath one's feet and sniffed a fresh breeze. During the spring days of 1918 the funerals continued daily from early morning until dusk in consequence of the ever-increasing mortality arising from tuberculosis. If one wanted to accompany a funeral, one simply went to the morgue and waited until a new procession started.

One day Dr. Berger and I went together. Fifty to sixty wooden coffins lay about in front of the barracks while weary, stoical soldiers hauled down one body after another from the two or three thousand naked corpses which had been laid throughout the winter on separate shelves in a storehouse, and laid them with careless hands in the rough coffins. Twenty Cossacks rode up at a trot. Each coffin was borne upon the shoulders of four men, and at the tail of the long procession of fifty corpses were grouped the officers who had come to accompany them to the cemetery. The procession wound its way along a narrow, well-trodden path that led over the saddle between the hills. A path that could be traced all the year

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round by the shavings and sawdust — last pillows of the dead — that continually fell out from between the joints in the coffins. On fine days the path stretched out yellow and endless as far as the Home-hill. First came a tiny Russian graveyard with slanting double crosses and an iron railing as a defence against the wolves. Next a Chinese cemetery of tiny mounds from which thin sticks stood up bearing strips of paper with little wavy drawings in Indian ink that fluttered in the breeze. Beside each grave tiny bowls of rice and water had been set down — for the feeding of the dead.

Slowly a vast block of rock rose up before our eyes — a monument raised by the prisoners of war. A few commemoratory lines had been inscribed on the west side of the monument, which was surmounted by an eagle ready to take flight, whose gaze was directed towards Europe. On all sides of the monument the steppe stretched out like a dead forest. Line after line could be seen from the crest of the hill — silent, unending, gruesome — Maltese crosses for the most part, and often bearing no name. Here and there a gravestone stood out from amidst the crosses, a hexagonal block, polished and engraved by the hands of officers. At the eastern end of the cemetery a hundred men worked at digging graves in ground that had not yet thawed from the winter's frost. The graves were scarcely more than shallow depressions in which the coffins lay covered with a bare handful of earth. Whilst the grave-diggers worked apace, we wandered for a time through the rows of graves. An elderly Captain came and attached himself to us and pointed out the resting-places of those we knew.

"There lies Baranny," he said. "I lived with him. Because he attempted to escape he was thrown into *katorga*, and when he was let out, he died. There lies a Nostitz. He hanged himself because he was whipped publicly for having given a careless salute. There's Bergner, who starved whilst under arrest. . . ."

We seated ourselves upon a smooth rock. The sky was

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brilliantly blue, the horizon flat as a pancake. The steppe stretched out into infinity like a glassy, light-green sea. Away in the distance a train rolled towards Europe, leaving behind it a trail of white smoke.

"A mother waits at home for each of them," said Dr. Berger, with his eyes fixed upon the crosses as if in an attempt to count them.

A short while ago I was once more invited by that good fellow Saltin. His room was filled with a number of young officers, and he declared laughingly that in a fury Captain Schank had fled to a bridge club. A Hungarian Lieutenant, Teleky by name, related his experiences on attempting for the first time to escape. "For months I collected the manure from the commandant's horse," he said. "For this purpose I often waited for hours. Whenever I saw a Russian riding past, I never let him out of my sight and followed the track of his horse's hoofs. My comrades soon noticed that I always went about with Russians, but I did it solely for the purpose of collecting the droppings from their horses. Alongside the fence I made a small garden and planted potatoes round the edges. Everything depended upon their growing tall enough. Thanks to the manure, they grew magnificently and soon became so thick and tall that, lying upon my stomach, I could begin to dig a tunnel beneath the shelter of their leaves. As I had only a table-spoon to dig with, it took me many nights; and all the time I worked under the very noses of the sentries."

At midnight came Roselli, with his dark-haired artist's head, and sang for us a few songs to the accompaniment of his lute. Everyone became silent when he sang:

In deinen Augen glimmt ein Licht
So grau in grün,
Wie dort die Nacht den Stern umflicht.

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Wann kommst du? — Meine Fackeln lohn!
Lass glühn! Lass glühn!
Schmück mir dein Haar mit wildem Mohn!

Or:

Auf einem jungen Rosenblatt
Mein Liebster mir geblasen hat
Wohl eine Melodei.
Es gab mir viele Dinge kund,
Das Rosenblatt am roten Mund,
Und war kein Wort dabei!

Or:

Wie dein Ohr brennt, wie dein Mieder drückt!
Rasch, reiss auf, du atmest mit Beschwerde . . .
Oh, wie hüpft dein Herzchen nun beglückt!
Komm, ich trage dich, du wildes Wunder:
Wie dich Gott gemacht hat! Weg den Plunder!
Und dein Brautbett ist die ganze Erde. . . .

When he stopped, a Lieutenant seated next to me, a fair-haired, silent man, took a photograph from his pocket and handed it to me.

"Is that your wife?" I asked.

"No," he replied cheerfully. "I don't even know her. She was the wife of a man who died of typhus. But when I reach home, I'll marry her. For two whole years I have dreamed of her. . . ."

I paid a visit to Pod. On my way to the upper barracks I passed the carpenters' shop. Nearly all the corpses had gone, and the carpenters were once more cutting out new planks.

"Listen to me," I said to the sapper who had made my table; "couldn't you make another table? It need only be

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a small one." He scratched the back of his head. "That's difficult," he said. "We have again got an order for three thousand coffins. Our whole stock is finished, and the commandant says that next spring we'll need more than we did this year! I'll have to make it after hours."

"Try. It's for a man in the upper barracks. Podbielski — a dragoon. When can he come for it?"

"Oh, in eight days."

As I entered my old barracks, I saw Pod on sentry-go. Suschka jumped delightedly about me. Pod drew his Chinese cloak around him and motioned me with his hand to take a seat. Not a word was spoken.

"What about our return home, boy?" he finally asked.

A lump rose in my throat. "I don't know, Pod," I said sadly.

He cleared his throat. "Yes. But . . ." he began.

I turned and looked him in the face. His great doglike eyes were sad and lustreless. His beard around his mouth was thin and chewed up. "Pod . . ." I said consolingly. "Don't lose courage!"

He shook his head. "No," he said roughly, "it's no good — this getting up and down and walking round about. . . . I think we all feel the same. No!" he suddenly broke forth, "it's no longer any good. For God's sake! Cold — hot! Cold — hot! Going out — staying in! War — peace! War — peace! God in heaven! . . . At last we've got clothes and boots, and now they give us nothing more to eat! One after another goes down with consumption. Yesterday someone went mad. 'Castrate me!' he suddenly yelled out. 'Castrate me!' Every week someone goes like that. We'd all been too sure. We'd all pictured ourselves as already at home, do you understand? That's what's the matter."

"I don't believe that Semjonoff will hold out for long," I observed, without thinking. But Pod understands too much.

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"You only say that to comfort me," he said. "In reality . . . Plenty of them here say that it can last for years."

"How are the others?" I finally asked.

"Brünn is done for since this change came about. He is slowly masturbating himself to death. Like a baboon. When he did it a short time ago near me, I hit him so hard that he lay upon the floor."

"You shouldn't have done that, Pod."

"Shouldn't have done it? All of them would have caught it from him! Are we living in a monkey-house?"

"And Blank?" I asked hurriedly.

"He's also done for. For half a rouble he'll do anything you want with you."

I bent my head and stroked Suschka. Always the same old story — always the same.

"Yesterday I caught one of them just as he was at Suschka," Pod went on. "It was the black-haired electrician. If the dog hadn't howled so . . . Before I had finished with him, dirty swine, he was only fit to be carried into hospital."

He fell into a silence. "I suppose I shouldn't have done that, eh?" he asked presently. "Let 'em do what they like, eh? Let the whole filthy madhouse go where it's going, eh? You can afford to talk like that! This doesn't happen in your room."

"Oh," I answered softly, "don't be so sure of that. It's only done in secret, one doesn't see it so openly . . . but at bottom it's just the same."

"Yes, we're only men," said Pod, and added: "Schnarrenberg is down in the mouth."

Presently little Blank came along to relieve Pod. His chest had fallen in, red spots stood out upon his cheeks, and dreadful rings encircled his eyes.

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"I saw you standing in front of the canteen," I said. "Should you have liked to buy something?"

"No," he said in a tired voice. "I only stand there . . . just so . . ."

I went along with Pod to visit the others, who were lying languidly about. A couple were playing cards. Brünn sat crouching against the wall with eyes that had sunk deep into their sockets. As soon as I sat down beside him, he said to me: "My wife has a child, *Junker.*"

"How has she managed that?" I asked thoughtlessly.

"He's had a letter from his wife telling him so," interrupted the artist.

The Tadpole laughed. "That's not so bad!" he said sneeringly. "The same thing has happened to a woman in our village. Two years after the death of her husband she bore a child. But she firmly declares that she got it from him."

"What! And?" asked the artist.

"What! And? Why, when someone said to her that her husband had been dead for two years, she replied: 'What's that to do with me? It's history and that's an end of the matter. I can keep my child so long as I want to!'"

A couple of men laughed — a mirthless laughter, empty and hollow.

"Don't be angry about it, Brünn," I said consolingly.

"I'll kill her when I get home!" he foamed.

"Then kill yourself first!" cried Pod angrily.

"What do you want?" roared Brünn. (Had he gone mad?) "You miserable cowherd! You starving windbag! You niggardly driver of a dung-cart!"

"Must I knock you down again?" Pod roared back at him. "You stallion! You ram! You beast! . . ."

I sprang up. "Steady, Pod! My God! What's this for a new way of behaving? Shame on you both! Weren't you once

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the best of friends? Isn't it enough that the Russians are doing us to death? Must you also quarrel among yourselves? Be sensible, for God's sake. . . ."

Pod stood up and went out.

"Nevertheless Pod was right, Brünn," I said quietly. "One shouldn't throw stones in a glass-house. What is one man's meat is another man's poison. Your wife has done nothing more than you yourself have done a hundred times in thought and deed. . . ."

"But I'm a man!" he whimpered. "A man, a man . . ."

"Shut your mouth, you yelping puppy!" growled the Schwalangscher.

I got up. What was I to do? Stamp out these ideas? That was hopeless. Or answer him like a clergyman by saying that it was only an eye for an eye inasmuch as he himself . . . No, that irritated me.

"Good-bye, men!" I said in a dejected tone as I left the room. It had gone so far: the best of friends hated one another. . . .

"This afternoon an Austrian was here," said Olfert to me on my return. "You are to go to him up to five o'clock — Bergmann, Barrack IV, first floor."

I went. As I went, I asked myself: "What does he want?" In the barracks a stout cavalry officer was pointed out to me. "Listen, Ensign," he began, "our interpreter is still ill. Hence we should like to ask you . . . A sentry has offered us a girl or two — good, young things — from an officers' brothel in Tschita. We couldn't understand each other very well, so I told him to return at five o'clock. . . ."

I bit my lips. Should I? Should I not? If I refused, my life would be a little hell. He told me all. Price, number of intending customers, length of stay. Oh, he was not in the least bit shy — didn't try to disguise anything!

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"In return," he said, "I've set your name down as second on the list."

"No, thanks all the same, Captain."

"Why? You know I really can't put you first. After all, we've had the most work — "

"I should rather not in any case, Captain," I said, breaking him off short.

"Not at all? Man alive! Think of it — as second! "

I had great trouble in persuading him that I had other grounds for my refusal. Fortunately the sentry arrived punctually.

I have received my first parcel! Everything I wanted was in it, although it was half empty; the other half must have been stolen. My father wrote that it was the third parcel that had been sent to me with the same contents. And I received only one, and that half empty! On the cover was written in his handwriting: "We will bring the ideal Fatherland into being and set less store by our lives than by our ideals."

Almost at the same time my first remittance came to hand: five hundred roubles. Through Vereniki's intervention I was successful in having it all paid out at once; as a rule large sums were only doled out in monthly payments of fifty roubles. At last I could once more buy cigarettes! Only English cigarettes, made up in China, were to be obtained: Swallow, Honey-bee, Golden Helmet. Still, the chief thing was that there were any to be had. I gave fifty roubles to Schnarrenberg to be distributed among my squad.

Today the sentry must have brought the women. After supper several men disappeared from the room — quietly and slinkingly. First Merkel, then Windt, and finally a cadet as the third. Suddenly the thought came to me: "Where is Olfert? " I grew

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uneasy. Had he also . . . ? Supposing he were ruined for life . . . ? A decent, straight, healthy man. . . . I got up.

"Where are you off to, Ensign?" asked Dr. Berger, laying his hand upon my shoulder. I felt limp. The way he looked at me . . . I swallowed hastily. "I'm only going to look for Olfert, Lieutenant," I finally managed to say.

"Is that true?" he said softly.

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"Good! Then go. And if he won't come, tell him I desire to speak to him — immediately and on duty."

Once I had crossed the threshold, I began to hurry. Perhaps it was already too late? The sentry had brought them into an empty room in Barrack II. As I mounted the steps, I could see that the passage was already filled with officers. They stood waiting in threes, one behind the other — majors, ensigns, captains, lieutenants — all mixed up together. I descried Merkel — and Windt a few paces behind him. A voice called sarcastically: "Hello! Look at him! He's in a hurry." I pushed my way through and entered the room. A small table on which a lamp was burning stood beside the door. At the table sat the fat Captain with a long list spread out before him. The room was divided into two by sheets hung from the ceiling, and behind the sheets could be seen three beds.

A grey-haired Major and a young Lieutenant stood before the Captain. I overheard them quarrelling with each other. "Rank makes no difference here, Major," said the Lieutenant coldly. "The order of entry is the only thing that counts. Rank doesn't exist any longer here. Here we're all alike — only men!"

"Terribly sorry," interrupted the Captain, "but Bender is right, Major. It was the only possible way. . . . And I see from the list that your name undoubtedly comes after that of the Lieutenant." The Major turned angrily away. An unseen hand drew back the centre curtain. A young Lieutenant, whom I knew well, came forth half dressed.

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"Your turn, Lieutenant Bender," said the Captain in a matter-of-fact voice.

I approached the table in confusion. "Ha!" laughed the Captain. "Have you thought better of it?"

"No," I managed to ejaculate, "I only want to know if an Ensign Olfert is on the list."

"Wait a moment. . . ." He ran his eyes over the names. The Lieutenant went out with a terribly white face. Behind the curtains a muffled scream rang out. The perspiration stood out on my forehead, and my legs began to shake. "I've never known a woman — not a single woman," I thought to myself. "Never had a woman. Have always thought of it as something beautiful — magnificent — great . . ." I thought and thought. "To hell with it! Now everything is spoiled! Everything, everything!"

"Yes, Olfert's name is here," said the fat Captain finally. I rushed out without answering him or saluting him and pushed my way again through the waiting ranks.

"Heavens! That was quickly done!" a voice called out enviously.

Olfert stood in the last rank. I seized him by the arm and took him outside with me. "Olfert," I said, "come with me."

His eyes were fixed upon the ground. "I've already paid," he replied restively.

"If I — if you —" I burst forth, and ceased. "Will you come or not?" I asked coldly. He fidgeted. "Have you never heard of Asiatic syphilis?" I asked in a whisper. "Mouth, nose, eyes — everything eaten up? Will you — In any case, Dr. Berger wishes to speak with you," I said decisively. "At once, and on duty."

He wrenched himself free. "Come along! To hell!" he foamed.

I went ahead, and he followed me like a dog. I opened the

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door and thrust him inside. "Here he is, Doctor," I said, in a careless tone. Berger gave us a long and penetrating glance. His lips trembled. "Go and sleep, boys," he said. And not another word.

After four days the brothel was closed down by the commandant, to whom its existence had been betrayed out of envy and spite by an officer who had been too late in applying to have his name put down on the already overfilled list. I was standing amidst a crowd in the barrack-yard as the girls were brought out. Cossacks escorted them on both sides and suggestively rolled their tongues across their lips. Three pretty, childlike prostitutes, two dark and slender and catlike, and the third a broad-shouldered, full-bosomed blonde. Their faces were chalky-white beneath the powder, and the fear of death shone in their eyes.

"They're done for," Windt said dryly. "Vereniki has handed them over to the guard — six hundred men — so I am told. They can do what they like with them — that's his form of punishment. Awful, isn't it?" For a while he kept silence. "Still, when one looks at it squarely — it was dear enough. And big business involves big risks. What didn't they earn! Thousands of roubles each, I tell you. Vereniki has collared it all."

"That would have been punishment enough," said Müller. "But to hand 'em over to the Cossacks, of whom two-thirds are syphilitic. . . . No, Vereniki always was and will be a brute."

"Neither of the dark-haired girls will survive it," said Merkel, in his matter-of-fact way. "At the most the blonde . . ."

"I simply can't understand that," said Seydlitz next day, with the expression of the greatest contempt I had ever seen pass across his face. "One after the other. Does a woman mean nothing more to them? Perhaps if one got peace for six months. But in eight days one's just as bad as ever. Often I

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shiver at the thought of our masculinity, and this everlasting sex business irritates me more and more."

"Me also," said Olfert. "But what will you do? It's the problem of all prisoners."

"Besides, Seydlitz," I remarked, "only three from our room were there. Three out of twenty is only a small percentage. All the rest think as we do."

"Only three?" queried Seydlitz. "Really only three?" Olfert seized his cap and hurriedly went off.

Yesterday the small and slender Hungarian, Lieutenant Teleky, paid me a visit. He asked if he could speak to me for a time alone.

"Certainly," I answered, "at once," and left the room with him. We went as far as the mortuary, where nobody was about.

"I am going to escape again," he said excitedly. "I'm going to be in at the death! I ask you: will you come along?"

I hastily lit a cigarette. My hands shook as I raised them to my lips. "At once?" I asked.

"I have been working for six months on the plan. Yesterday I finally succeeded in getting into touch with someone. In the baths —"

"A Russian?"

"A Chinese. A straight man in as far as one can ever judge the straightness of one of these sliteyed men." He groped in the pocket of his hussar's cloak and drew forth a tiny, dirty piece of paper. "He can write and speak Russian well," he said. I read: "I am prepared to lead four men by a secret route to Tientsin. I am in possession of horses and weapons. In three days' time come to the baths outside."

I returned him the paper. He paced to and fro. "God! Good God!" he whispered three or four times.

"Yes," I said finally, "we'll go. But how?"

Teleky gripped my hand, and asked: "Whom shall we

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choose?" For a couple of hours we debated the matter between us. I thought of Pod. I thought of Saltin. Finally I chose Seydlitz.

"What do you say to Lieutenant Hassan?" he asked. I laughed and shut my eyes. I knew him well and he seemed to stand before me: lanky and sinewy; a sharp, bird-like head; the bent legs of a cavalryman; eyes of fire that blazed up upon the very slightest provocation.

"Good," I said. "You, Seydlitz, Hassan, and I — the complete Triple Alliance!"

"Very well. You'll be responsible for the rest of the negotiations?"

"Yes. Only one thing more: to what limit can I go in my offer? I myself have four hundred."

He wrinkled his forehead. "I've only got three," he said. "But Hassan will have more. . . ."

"Then he must lend some to Seydlitz. I'll offer him three at the most for each of us. Chinese cloaks we can buy cheaply in the men's store." He placed his hand across his mouth and ran off.

"Of course, Teleky," I said reassuringly.

Seydlitz was all excitement. "That you should have thought of me!" he kept repeating unceasingly. "Now we'll certainly be in in time for the death!" He went off determined to raise money everywhere, nor did he experience much difficulty in doing so, since for this purpose he was capable of anything. I myself lived in a fever of excitement. Should I have chosen Pod? Certainly not. He would have at once let the cat out of the bag. Or that splendid Austrian Saltin? No. Seydlitz could speak Russian fairly, and he possessed the greatest strength of will. He was certainly the only one to be seriously considered.

Three days later, through Vereniki's intermediary, I was given a guard. I walked ahead with long steps, while my Cossack came with clatering sabre at my heels. When we reached

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the bath, I gave him half a rouble. "Go and have a drink of schnapps," I said laughingly. "I'll not run away."

"*Spassivo, Gospodin,*" he replied, and went.

In the outer room an old Chinaman was seated. He wore a black-laced jacket. His face was oily and repulsive. I noticed that his cat's-eyes broadened in amazement when he saw me approach in place of the Hungarian. I greeted him, took the paper out of my pocket, and unfolded it in such a way that he could not fail to recognize it.

"Were you sent by the dark-haired young officer?" he inquired, in the nasal Russian spoken by the Chinese living on the borders of the Gobi desert.

"Yes. He doesn't know enough Russian. Here's your paper."

"Do you also want to come?"

"If it's not too dear."

"I'll give you each a horse, food and drink, a revolver and cartridges. There'll be a pack-horse for every two. I'll lead you to Tientsin by a smuggler's route that is unknown to a single Cossack. We'll ride by night only, and by day we sleep in hiding-places that I have already prepared. I've been a smuggler since my boyhood, yet never a Cossack has set eyes on my horse. You'll undoubtedly reach there in safety —"

"How much do you want?" I asked, interruping his flow of words.

"Five hundred a head," he whispered.

"Ha ha!" I laughed. "You're a fool! I can't give you more than two hundred."

"No," he answered firmly. "For such a sum I'm not prepared to sell my head."

"You've just said that there was no danger?" I interrupted.

"Yes . . . certainly. . . . Well, say four hundred!"

"Two hundred and fifty," I replied.

"No, no." He raised his hands and stepped backwards. "You

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don't realize how much everything costs — horses, ammunition, food."

"That doesn't cost anything," I said calmly, and laughed into his slanting eyes. "You've got to go back in any case to get fresh supplies of tea — or opium!"

He regarded me evilly. "You are too clever," he said. "But if you can't pay it, I must find wealthier officers . . ."

"You can spare yourself the trouble," I said, seizing my cap and walking towards the door. "You won't find anybody in the whole camp with more than one hundred roubles."

"Who is the third?" he began again, holding me by the button of my tunic.

"A young Turk," I said. "A Kurd."

"Ah!" he cried out. "Will he pay in gold?"

"I think that he has still got some."

"Three hundred in that case," he said hoarsely.

"Done."

"In seven days there will be no moon. At eleven-thirty I'll be waiting behind the hill before the centre gate. Do you know the hill?"

"I know it."

"You mustn't come in this coat."

"We'll come clad like your own people."

"Eleven-thirty at night," he said once more. The door closed. My heart pounded as I thought: "In seven days . . . God in heaven! . . . Frau von Hannecken is in Tientsin. . . . From there as stoker by way of India . . ." I undressed myself feverishly, jumped into the steam bath, and poured water over the glowing stones. Almost immediately came the thud of a sabre upon the door. "*Sitschas!*" I cried out. When I came out, the Cossack was sitting upon my clothes and humming a tune. I dressed quickly and went with long steps through the yellow sand towards the camp. I never even honoured the station with

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a glance, only I suddenly caught myself singing softly — like the Cossack.

It was impossible to say good-bye to anyone. Since one was no longer certain of one's companions, it would have meant incurring the risk of betrayal to have done so. Not that anyone would have deliberately betrayed the secret — a careless word, and . . . What was to be done with my diary? Everything else might go, execpt that — that had to be preserved. I resolved to place it, together with a letter in which I took leave of him and requested him to give the diary to the next delegate or the Fair Angel, under Dr. Berger's pillow immediately before I left. It cost me a severe pang to leave it behind. But there was nothing else to be done. If I were shot or taken prisoner, it would certainly be lost; and that was not to be thought of.

Another hour and I must cease writing. The majority are already asleep. Teleky will wait for us by the morgue with the Chinese cloaks. Shall I ever again hold you in my hands, diary of mine? I want to write so much more. I'm like a man in love, unable to separate himself from the beloved and always finding something more to say. Outside, somebody is hooting like a brown owl. Seydlitz looks at me. The hour has come.

I am back. Everything went wrong. I cannot write. I am too upset — in too great despair. Perhaps tomorrow. Or the next day.

Eight days today since we made our attempt to escape. I can now set down the events in the order of their occurrence. I left the room unnoticed by anyone. Dr. Berger was still reading and did not notice that I pushed the diary beneath his pillow. On arriving at the mortuary we found Hassan and Teleky already there. We hastily clad ourselves in our Chinese cloaks,

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and Hassan led the way with a small spade in his hand. He glided noiselessly ahead like a puma. We followed behind him in extended order and halted — each some twenty paces from the fence — listening while he dug out a hole beneath the fence to crawl through. The night was still. The sky black and starless. From the watch-towers in the corners came at times the sound of the tread of heavy riding-boots. Now and then the clear howl of a wolf could be heard out of the dark expanse of desert. Nothing stirred. Once more an owl hooted. I started and began to move along with my outstretched arms touching the wire, until after going some eighteen paces I knocked against Teleky. "Get through!" he said softly. I dropped down, swung myself through, and stood up again.

"Forward!" said Hassan in his perfect German. "Half is accomplished!"

Four minutes later we heard two horses snorting. "Are you there?" whispered Hassan, and his guttural voice grew hoarser. He was there, hidden behind the hill, and silently and hastily indicated our horses to us — rough Mongolian horses, incapable of being worn out. The pack-horses were attached to two of them by means of long straps tied to their tails. Lieutenant Hassan was the first into the saddle. He sprang into it with a violence that made it appear as though he were intoxicated by his newly won freedom.

"The pistols," I said to the Chinaman. He made a short backward movement of the head. "Later, later . . ." I heard him whispering. The tiny horses moved at a machine-like trot, the clatter of their hoofs silenced by the desert sand, and the only sound to be heard was the jangling of the harness. Five or six minutes passed away. Then there came again the hoot of an owl — a real owl this time, and not Hassan — that brushed my face as it flew past. "Come with! Come with!" it hooted. The next second a shot cracked out behind us. A second and a third followed in swift succession. Alarm shots rang out from

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all the watch-towers. Someone cried out in the camp. I galloped forward and drew up with Hassan.

"Halt!" I cried in low tones. "About turn, Hassan, about turn! We've been seen, we're pursued, perhaps we've been betrayed! It's useless unless one has a start. About turn, Hassan!" He raised the whip that lay across his saddle-bow, hissed through his teeth: "I . . . never will turn back . . . never, oh, never . . ." and beat his horse across the head.

"And you, Teleky?" I called out.

"No!" he cried through his clenched lips. "No!" He raised himself in his stirrups, laid himself along the horse's neck and began to flog his flanks. Seydlitz drew up beside me. He was more cautious. "Are you coming back with me, Seydlitz?"

"Yes," he said in a dazed voice.

We galloped in great curves back to the camp. Cossacks rode past us in the distance, shrieking and shooting, and I deceived them by giving vent to Russian cries. So great was their wild excitement that we got through them safely — unrecognized by anyone in the darkness — and reached our place of exit from the camp. Giving our horses a couple of lashes that caused them to tear away into the distance, we dashed to our tunnel, crawled through, and filled it up from the inner side.

Everybody in our room was out of bed. As we had left our cloaks outside, no one realized that we were the cause of all the noise and excitement.

"God in heaven!" said Windt. "Several must have got out!" Dr. Berger had already placed my diary in his box. He said nothing. He only silently stroked my hair.

Next day roll was called. We were all numbered off and at ten o'clock marched into the well-nigh empty morgue. Each was forced to stand for three minutes in a small, light room on the floor of which lay two men in Chinese cloaks. As a warning,

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it was said! Young Hassan lay partly on his side, and his beautiful, proud forehead had been pierced by one of the countless shots that had been fired. A tiny piece of brain hung like a white worm on the opening of the wound. Lieutenant Teleky had been placed in a sitting position against the wall. His handsome and insolent boy's face was distorted as if the thin lips had been frozen in the act of uttering the proud "No!" that had been his last word to me. His throat was hacked by sabre-cuts, and his eyes were fixed upon us in a dull and glassy stare.

Yesterday our interpreter died of tuberculosis — a pucka Austrian Captain. Shortly before he took to his bed Colonel von Strann had once more asked him why it was that he had not sought to escape. "With your knowledge of the language, it would be easy for you," said the Colonel, "and think what a career would then be open to you!"

"Many thanks, Colonel!" replied Bettenberg. "I should prefer being a live captain to being a dead major!" He too had been unnerved, bereft of idealism, by Siberia. Like so many others, his own life had become dearer to him than the welfare of the majority, yet in the end it also had failed him. . . .

Vereniki, who always salutes me politely whenever we meet, told me one day that the Ataman Semjonoff had conquered the whole of Transbaikalia and had raised Tschita to the dignity of capital of the new State. The revolution that had broken out in May in Central Siberia on the part of the Czech Legionaries — "Your former Austrian comrade-in-arms," he said laughingly — had acted like a bugle-call to arouse the whole middle class. All Siberia had fallen into the hands of the Whites. For next spring a great offensive under a unified command had been planned that should drive the Reds to hell in a few months.

"What about us?" I asked.

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He patted me on the shoulder. "You must wait until we have made a fresh peace with Germany," he said laughingly. "The Peace of Brest Litovsk cannot be discussed by a good Russian. But I know of something better for you to do: join our army! On my recommendation Semjonoff will at once give you a lieutenancy! Besides, the latest news from the front is bad."

"In what way?"

"Your offensive has failed. The Americans and the French are advancing." He turned the subject lightly. "Think it over, Ensign," was his final advice. I was stunned. Was it true? Impossible! After the collapse of the Russian front? "He's only trying to damp my courage in order to get me to go over to his army," I said to myself in an endeavour to raise my spirits. God and Father! — if I had not this consolation . . .

Since it became obvious that the rule of the Whites in Siberia was more enduring than had at first seemed possible, our discipline perceptibly deteriorated. The condition of things in our camp became the same as it was among the men in the upper camp. The disappointment of all our hopes broke our power of endurance. The hours that had been set apart, as the result of conferences and agreement among us, for sleep and work, rest and exercise, were no longer observed. Gambling and card-playing gradually increased until they lasted till morning, to the accompaniment of noise and quarrelling. Drinking-bouts turned certain corners of our room into something resembling a madhouse. Dr. Berger was powerless. He who had been able to do what he wished with quiet and normal men lost all influence over this crowd of overstrained men rendered abnormal by the long duration of their imprisonment. Each day serious complaints were presented to him for his investigation. Lately the two business men complained of Windt, the athlete — that he was in the habit of doing gymnastics stark naked, making

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much noise — at whatever hour of the day or night he chose. What could the doctor do? He was bound to follow up the complaint by speaking to Windt.

"What?" laughed Windt. "What is there remarkable to be seen on me? Let me go on doing gymnastics! I've got a wife at home who will expect much from me after her long abstinence, don't you know? And if I don't train properly . . ." I noticed that Berger blushed like a girl. He was helpless to deal with such things and could only keep silence. He picked up his cap and went hastily out of the room.

"Poor old Doctor!" said Seydlitz.

"Yes," said Olfert sarcastically, "Siberia is not the land where mimosa flourishes!"

A few days later a Lieutenant spoke with me about my attempted escape. "You should be glad that it failed!" he said. "I escaped in 1916, and now I am here in Siberia for a second time! As I was making preparations to escape, my Captain said to me: 'Man alive! If you're successful, you'll certainly be given the *Pour le mérite!*' I was successful — and do you know how I was received? An officer said to me: 'Damnation! I thought you were cleverer, Scholz! If one is nice and safe, how can anybody sacrifice that? Who demanded of you that you should abandon your lovely camp, your regular food, and your good bed? In the name of God, whoever made you do that?' My Colonel said: 'Well, it's good to see you again! Now get after the enemy! You've been resting long enough, lying for years on bearskins, while we . . .' Distinctions? *Pour le mérite?* Of that I never heard a word. You all live here in the mistaken idea that everything at home is just as it was when you left it in 1914 or 1915. Good God! that's long past. All our great enthusiasms and great moments are forgotten — now one uses the word 'swindle' to describe the war. There are still a few idealists, but the majority . . . And at bottom

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it's no wonder. . . . It's only natural. . . . What's too much is too much. In any case, no second attempts for me! I can now keep control of myself! "

Last night I could not sleep. " Is what he said the truth? " I asked myself incessantly. " Can it really be? . . . No! it simply cannot be so. With such men one does not conquer half the world! Only his bitterness caused him to speak like that, eh? He really thinks quite differently! And yet a grain . . . ? "

We discovered a new method of getting firewood. At a time when the thermometer stood at fourty-five degrees below zero, the camp authorities allowed us four pieces of wood weekly for our room; and we had no proper food, not a single real bed!

" Do as we do," said Saltin, a good father to us all, as we poured out our griefs to him. " Once a week we climb upon the roof of our barracks and, under the direction of an architect, saw away everything that is not absolutely necessary for the support of the roof."

I told this to Dr. Berger, who refused to countenance it. " All right! " I said quietly. " If you choose to let us freeze, we have the right to look after ourselves." Five or six of us made ready a couple of strong saws, while I asked Saltin for a loan of the architect. The roof of our barracks had never been touched before. What a nest of worms! The architect, who was a lieutenant from Transylvania, went with blue chalk from prop to prop, cross-beam to cross-beam. " The Russians are so lavish with wood in the building of their houses," he said laughingly, " that two-thirds can be removed without risk. Only one must know what must remain, and not make a mistake! " He moved about marking beams here and there. At times he stopped to calculate stress and strain. We sawed away busily, and the sawn supports steadily went to swell an ever-increasing pile.

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"Boys!" said Windt, "there's warmth for you! I have always envied our fellows in Turkestan. . . ."

"Don't trouble to, Lieutenant!" said the architect. "I was there myself!"

"Tell us about it!" called one or two voices.

"Ah! there's not much to tell. Hot as a furnace day and night, and not a drop of water. I've come to hate heat to such a degree that I'd rather freeze for the rest of my life than sweat once more as we did in Turkestan!"

"Were you treated better than here?" inquired the Warrior.

The Lieutenant laughed. "Listen!" he said. "When four officers escaped in Astrakhan, they punished the remaining 296 by fencing up all windows and forbidding them to enter the barrack-yard, with the thermometer standing at fifty degrees! For a month we lived like that — can you imagine it? Moreover, in Troizki, out of seventeen thousand men, nine thousand died in three months. . . ."

Yesterday evening Hansen, Lacke, and Farben invited me to have a drink with them in their corner. I don't know what they found in me, but as I took my departure, they all said that I must visit them oftener. Our conversation stuck in my mind for a long time. Was that because they opened their hearts to me? "Oh, if we were only at the front!" said Hansen finally. "There's fighting there. Good. I understand that, if necessary. But here . . . What I want to know is: why must war also dominate things here in Siberia? Isn't that the very limit? Is a defender of his country a criminal? We prisoners of war are protected by treaties — by a convention. It's all very well to say that we are lucky in that nothing more can happen to us! Aren't tuberculosis and typhus bacilli flying about here more thickly than the densest hail of bullets? Every bullet is not deadly, but when one of these 'bullets' here scratches ever so slightly one of our worn-out bodies, that's an end to it! No,

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give me a lead bullet! And that's not all, there's a lot more at the front — for example leave! And even if you never got any leave, the time went more quickly; they've got work, something to occupy them, a safety-valve! We've got nothing. They can defend themselves; we've got to remain quiet. Out of every four of us, one is already dead — out of every four men at the front is one always killed? Not at all! And when one must die, which is the worst: to fall, sword in hand, in the thick of the fight, or expose oneself helplessly, and inactively await the coming of death? "

The news from the front has become increasingly worse. Vereniki certainly had not deceived me. We are all confronted by a dilemma. " I cannot understand it when we had just attained to numerical equality with the troops that had been set free," said Dr. Berger yesterday. " And now we are forced to retreat as never before in the whole course of the war. America's material resources must have come into play. . . ." Everyone walked about dejectedly in the barrack-yard. Despondency was writ large upon each face. I often went for walks with the Warrior, since nobody else bothered about him.

" Ensign! " he said to me. " One can ask you a question. Is it possible that we overrated ourselves? "

I shrugged my shoulders. " To answer such a question here is quite impossible," I replied. " And, besides, could we have done anything else? " I felt annoyed with myself for avoiding his question. " If we win the war, we've certainly not done so," I said. " If we lose it, then undoubtedly! "

A Russian officer passed us by and returned our salute carelessly and with hatred in his eyes.

" Why do these men hate us so? " asked the little man beside me. " I don't hate them! Never have hated them! I simply fought because I believed the Fatherland had been attacked."

I only nodded. My God! Of what use were such questions in

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Siberia? Was he not right? Didn't we all go because we were attacked?

"That's true," I said wearily. "We'd never have volunteered for a war of conquest — you wouldn't have and I shouldn't have."

We walked on, saluting all the time, always saluting. A young Austrian Lieutenant, whom I knew well, came and joined us. I noticed suddenly that he no longer saluted, although he had formerly invariably done so. "Look, young man," I said, "there goes another fellow who kicks against the pricks!" Three paces farther on a Captain stopped him — one of the popular kind who knew of nothing better to do than to busy themselves in watching over the deportment of their inferiors in rank.

"Why don't you salute?" he growled out.

"Because I have already done so six hundred times this morning!" answered the Lieutenant coolly.

The Captain stormed at him! "Are you mad? Do you want to be an officer? To give an example worthy of being followed? Retire, three paces . . ."

The young Lieutenant did not move. "I'll be damned first!" he said in a clear and calm voice. And walked on.

No one was any longer able to shake off the nervousness and irritation that seized upon all simultaneously. Yesterday, for example, I had my first quarrel with Dr. Berger. That was symptomatic. One had to be almost at the end of one's tether before one could quarrel with so reserved and fine a man. In a discussion over some trifling and laughable matter I gave him a rough and unpremeditated answer. He started, gave me a long look, and, laying his hand upon my shoulder, said softly: "You too, Ensign? No, I am mistaken — not you!" Tears rushed into my eyes. I could have kissed his hand. Ah! we were only unlucky, unlucky unto death — nothing more. . . .

Collapse of Germany! Was I mad! Did I see ghosts? A

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regular Lieutenant stood in the barrack-yard without tunic and cap. He had put on all his decorations and kept striking his breast so that they rattled while he called out unceasingly: "All for nothing . . . all for nothing . . . all for nothing. . . ."

It was true. I could not set it upon paper. I could no longer distinguish white from black. Only: Vereniki had not lied. Ever since the summer we had been in full retreat. Saltin came from the chemist who had received the newspapers. "It's true, Ensign," he said. "But we weren't beaten by soldiers! It was the American trains day and night — day and night! Guns, ammunition, rifles, gas . . ." He was quite beside himself and repeated his words three times in succession. As he went away, he was crying.

The Russian officers were triumphant. One could see from their eyes, and from the way in which they saluted, that they were saying to themselves: "Now you've got it at last!" We could make no reply. We dragged ourselves around like criminals whose term of imprisonment has suddenly been lengthened into a life-sentence. How could we return home now? As sons of a powerless, defeated land? Nothing more? We thought the worst was behind us? Yet the worst was only just beginning. . . . Dr. Berger no longer spoke. Olfert went about silently. Seydlitz's thin face had become a mask to conceal the thoughts behind, while the Warrior went about with eyes swollen from crying. Merkel shrank up, and put on a resigned air. For three days Proschow lay silent, without moving — dead drunk. The cadet ceased his card-playing, and the business men stopped disputing amongst themselves in their corner. My God! what had happened to us? Had we all been condemned to death?

I went into the men's camp. Before I did so, I took down the picture of Holsteinerin, the champion mare, from the wall. I felt I needed it no longer. I should never again ride an old remount from the Z class. My intention was to take it to Pod,

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who was a peasant and would find pleasure in it. Besides, I felt I must take something for him with me each time I went to visit him. My old squad greeted me in silence. I silently seated myself between Pod and Suschka.

"Well, youngster?" he said softly. ("He's going to try to comfort me, this fellow," was the thought that passed through his mind.) "Pod," I said, by way of a beginning.

"Hold your tongue. You don't need to console me. I'm strong enough. But you . . . you are losing more than I. I'll return to my farm, as before. Perhaps I'll have to work harder in order to live — that's all. Good. Finished. But you . . . you who have had nothing from life, you who have given up everything — youth and health —" He paused. "You've got to meet the bill!" he ended roughly.

"Enough of that, Pod." I held out the picture. "I have brought you something. I don't want it any longer, do you understand? . . ."

He cleared his throat. "Good God! Once more . . ." He covered his eyes with his hands and suddenly rushed from the room. I looked around me. The artist was sitting behind me, and the rest were gathered around him — all muffled up to the eyes. In their flowing cloaks they resembled a regiment of famished Chinamen. Little Blank — the "girl" — lay in their midst. He looked like a dying man and coughed incessantly.

"Where is Schnarrenberg?" I asked Hatschek. He shrugged his shoulders. "Don't know, Ensign. Since the Revolution he has been living in the large room with the non-commissioned officers. He's afraid of us, can you understand? At first he behaved like a madman — shrieked, foamed, struggled. But ever since yesterday he has suddenly become quite as though he had been struck dumb. . . ."

"What's up with you, Blank?" I asked hoarsely.

"I don't know, Ensign," he answered limply. "I've always

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fever, am always in a cold sweat — deathly cold. . . . This coughing takes all the strength out of me. . . . And sometimes blood . . ."

"You must go about more! You've got a warm cloak! What you need is fresh air! Do go out more often, please! Pod will take you along with him. . . ."

"What are you talking about! I'm so weak that a breath of air would blow me away! Still, it'll soon be spring, eh?" A fit of coughing tore him. His glance fell upon his thin, child-like hands. On his thumbs were bright-red spots.

Later on came Schnarrenberg. His appearance gave me a shock. Unwashed and uncombed, clad in a dirty and unbrushed tunic, his whole figure was drawn up and pinched in; and his bull neck had become thin and bent. Never before had I seen him in such a state. He seated himself in front of me, stared into my eyes with a look that pierced into me like a knife, and asked in a hollow voice: "Is it true, Ensign?"

I could not reply. I thought of Seydlitz — not an inch of elasticity. "What, Schnarrenberg?" I asked.

"I must know!" he said obstinately. "I must know it for certain!"

Fear crept into my heart. "Don't do anything silly, Schnarrenberg," I said, in an effort at light-heartedness. He continued to gaze at me unblinkingly and as if he had not heard me. His eyes seemed to be gazing away into the distance behind me. "Do you think," he said slowly as though he were wrenching each word out of himself, "that I could . . . now . . . wait quietly . . . another three years?" He fell into a brooding silence. "You know very well why I have been able to stand it! Only because . . . because I hoped, believed . . . I'm too old for anything new . . . grown too old here in Siberia! You can do that — you who are the youth of Germany." He laughed insanely. "So it is true, eh?" he suddenly asked in his old,

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rough tone of command. "Advance, Ensign! Answer! Answer!"

"I don't know . . ." I said softly.

He stood up. "That means yes," he said calmly. "Otherwise you'd have said: 'No!' And not only said 'No'; you'd have yelled it aloud! Ah well! Ah well! It's only what I've expected. . . ." Once more he looked me up and down from head to toe — a long, penetrating glance. "You, boy . . . last ensign of my regiment . . ." he suddenly whispered, made a stiff right-about turn, and left the room.

Pod came back with red eyes. "For weeks I've had diarrhœa," he said. "Hence I've got to go out so often, do you understand? Confounded nuisance! It would be a case of vomiting if there were anything to eat! I've got to go every hour. It pulls one properly to pieces. It gripes all the time, all the time. And there's nothing there, do you understand? At times it feels as if one's very bowels would be pulled out of one. . . ."

"I'll bring you something to eat, Pod!"

"That's not why I said it!" he answered roughly. "Eat what you've got yourself. You're not much better. . . ."

He walked across to his new table and picked up the picture. "In her colouring and lines she's a bit like my Blesse," he said, with his head sunk upon his chest. He borrowed some nails from Hatschek and fixed the picture above his bed. Plunged in thought, I continued to watch him, until a noise outside the door aroused me. The door was kicked open, and six or eight men bore a heavy body into the room.

"There in that corner are his friends," a voice called out loudly. I caught sight between the bearers of two cavalryman's legs, a German dragoon uniform, a swollen blue face, a bushy moustache. "He'd been hanging for a time before we found him," said an Austrian. "By his braces."

It was Schnarrenberg — our sergeant major. His face was unrecognizable. His eyes were wide open. His moustache,

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which had formerly bristled so fiercely, hung limply from his lip. "So he is finished!" The thought was like a stab in the heart. "He thought it was the right way! He was true to himself. . . ."

All conventions and bonds of decency disappeared from our midst. Could anything else have happened? The thought of victory had hitherto held us up and given us strength — what was to hold us any longer? We were not weak nor evil; we were just as much and as little as we'd been before. If anyone frowns at our behaviour. . . . For my part I refrain from judgment and accusation. I have simply set down events — nothing more. And I've not sought to exonerate myself.

The pilot Proschow had another fight with the Turk yesterday. He ridiculed his religious beliefs, despite the warnings of some of the older men, until Abdulla, in a state of frenzy, sprang at him like a cat and sought to throttle him. Seized by a like frenzy, Proschow bit, scratched, fought. . . . From all sides we sprang to separate them. Thinking that we only meant to aid our comrade, the Turk turned upon us all, and it was only after a fierce fight that we were able to tie him down. Many of us were hurt and streaming with blood. Dr. Berger seated himself beside Abdulla in an endeavour to bring him to reason.

"They'd have killed each other if we hadn't been too much for them," said Windt.

"If this winter goes on much longer," said Seydlitz, "this sort of thing will happen every day."

Omsk had been made capital of the White State of Siberia and Admiral Kolchak had been chosen as its President.

"Now, then, Ensign?" asked Vereniki. "What about it? Your Emperor is in exile, and you are no longer bound by your oath of fealty —"

"I cannot believe it, Captain!"

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"Good God! Look here! I'll bring you the newspapers tomorrow. Then you come along with us. Done! What a chance for a young man like you! Besides, you are a soldier in every inch of you?"

"But not a mercenary, Captain!"

"What does that mean? Rubbish! For, in fact, you were one once! That the military spirit has gone out of you here, I can well understand; I'd have been the same in your place. But under a man like Kolchak you'll soon recover it again. He's a hero, a gentleman! Nobody better could have been found! Tomorrow then . . ." Away he went with a light tread — free, happy, full of hope — just as I was once! When? When? It seemed to me as if it had been many, many years ago. . . .

One evening at Saltin's an officer told us that he had spent a long time in Dostoievski's Krepost. "The upper bunks were ten and a half feet above the ground," he said. "Many who fell out of bed in their sleep got concussion of the brain. The place looks today just as it did in the middle of the last century! And we were treated in the same manner. . . . Only in Russia do they still crowd together men belonging to the highest order of European culture, as they used a century ago to crowd together the worst criminals! Sixteen thousand men died there then. Nevertheless it was better than the Kirchhof Barracks in Nikolaevsk, where I was before that! Only seventy men out of every thousand survived. The Russian guards used to press their dead bodies into coffins with their heels and the butts of their rifles. When the coffins were exhausted, they dug great pits in which they tipped the naked bodies by the dozen from the same cart that they used to bring the meat for our kitchen. These pits were left open until they were filled to the brim, and the uppermost bodies were always half-eaten by wolves before fresh corpses were thrown in to cover them. . . ."

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Last night, when everyone was asleep, Lieutenant Thurn seated himself upon my bed. I laid aside the book by Mantegazza and stared at him in astonishment. Excitement lit up his handsome, olive-skinned face; and his dark, almond-shaped eyes, whose whites had a bluish tint that one often sees in those of children, flickered unsteadily. "What's the matter with him?" I thought sympathetically.

"You have such a fine, clear skin . . ." he suddenly began.

My God! What did he mean? I laughed unwillingly as I said: "Indeed?" He came nearer to me. I felt his arm upon my leg.

"You are handsome," he went on. "I often dream of you. . . . You have a small, delicate mouth. . . . When you laugh, you show your teeth. . . ."

"I am a man, Lieutenant!" I interrupted him. He raised his hand as much as to say: "What does that matter?" and, as he dropped it again, he laid it upon my hip. "That's just it," he whispered. I took his hand in mine and placed it beside me on the bed-clothes.

"Lieutenant," I said firmly, "go to bed. It's time. I want to sleep."

"But why?" he asked in a weak voice, as his whole body trembled. "Let me sit a little longer on your bed. . . . It is so nice. . . . I love looking at you! . . . Look! I've brought you some cigarettes. . . ."

"Thanks, Lieutenant."

"Why do you always call me Lieutenant?" he interrupted me. "My name is Willmuth — just for once call me Willmuth."

"Thanks, Lieutenant," I continued my sentence, "I have my own cigarettes." He twisted himself about, and his lips trembled. He whispered something.

"What do you mean?" I said sharply. He bent over me and laid his hands upon my shoulders.

I jumped up as if someone had struck me, and roughly

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pushed away his hands. "If you don't go away at once," I said brusquely, "I'll call Dr. Berger."

"Why?"

"At once, please!"

He rose limply. Were there tears in his eyes? "Do be nice . . ." he begged.

"Get away! Get away!" I said aloud. Was it because I felt myself to be in danger? All of a sudden I became furious with anger. "That is absolutely beastly, do you understand? If you ever come near me again . . ." He gave me a look that pierced me through and through. Like a sick dog! I thought with a shiver. Finally he slunk off like a whipped cur. I remained awake for more than half the night. This also? I thought to myself. After a time I threw away the cigarettes that were the last remaining traces of my late visitor, the very same cigarettes that I had purchased myself for special occasions — La Ferme, Petrograd, best quality. A faint feminine scent still clung to the mouthpieces. . . .

I told Seydlitz about Vereniki and his proposal. "He won't leave me alone," I said. "I can't think why he wants to make a fool of me."

"Because you have Russian blood, I should think."

"That's true. But still . . ."

"Why won't you?"

"Because I'm no longer a soldier, Seydlitz. To be a soldier means to be a man such as you — or Schnarrenberg. For me it is quite impossible to go shooting and murdering any more. At the very utmost I might do it in case of necessity, and for our country. This, however, is a civil war."

He remained silent for a time. Then he suddenly asked: "Do you think he would take me?"

"You?" I said, taken completely by surprise. "Would you go over, Seydlitz?"

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"Yes. I am an officer. Nothing else. My father and my grandfather were also officers. It's my whole life and soul. A new age is beginning for Germany — in one sense or another — and of that there can no longer be the least doubt. I cannot unlearn all that I have learnt. All I know about is war — nothing else. I grew up in the army, in an atmosphere of war, and I'll remain in it. Further, the Whites are fighting for my own ideals: government and tradition. That's good enough for me. Perhaps one could just as easily join the Reds, who also declare that they are fighting for ideals, and these new ideals of theirs are not bad and are certainly more in accord with the times than our old ideals. But they are an undisciplined horde that won't tolerate a leader, as far as I could judge. Also I belong to the middle class. Why should I foul my own nest by fighting against it?"

He pondered for a while. "I've heard it said that Kolchak is the most honourable soldier in Russia. A man with clean hands. That's saying a lot in this country — perhaps the greatest thing that could be said. What more do I want? Above everything else, I must get away from here, do you understand? Only get away and do something, do anything. . . . Otherwise I'll go mad."

"And if you are killed?" I said in a depressed voice.

"Well, I shall at least have tasted freedom first!" he answered cheerily.

"How do you know that you'll remain alive? One of these days either typhus or consumption or" — he sighed deeply — "something worse still will get hold of us here. . . . For it may be years before we get home."

"I'll speak to Vereniki, Seydlitz."

"Do you think that he —"

"Undoubetedly. They need every man they can get. Besides, Semjonoff certainly knows the name of your famous ancestor."

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I was sheltering from the wind in a corner of the barracks when Lieutenant Köhler came timidly up to me. "Ensign," he began nervously, and his eyes rolled excitedly, "I am still looking in vain for my wife. I'd like to ask you, don't you know, something very special: If she comes again to your room . . . and calls me . . . and I don't come at once — then please hold on to her . . . don't let her go . . . lock her in . . . put a guard over her. . . ." He suddenly ceased speaking and began to laugh. Then he bent over my ear as if he wished to communicate a very sacred mystery to me. "Until — I — come!" he whispered, and hastened away with short, child-like strides. What he must have suffered! Day by day, hour by hour, he was plunged anew from the heights of heaven into the depths of the blackest hell. But, as he was already exhaused and light-headed, he would not have to endure it much longer. Such was our condition that in order to render ourselves better able to endure the unendurable, we consoled ourselves with the hope that in the near future death would remove from our midst one or other of the most terrifying faces.

There were those who declared that under the Whites conditions were better than they had been under the Reds. As a result of Bolshevik propaganda a party of so-called "Internationalists" had grown up among the prisoners of war, composed of German, Austrian, and Hungarian communists, who terrorized all those who refused to join their ranks. The Bolsheviks had placed them in command of the camp, and they had subjected the officers to the most abominable torture. I remember that pamphlets were distributed in the men's camp calling upon them to join the "Internationalists." Some hundreds, mostly Hungarians, did join them; but before they had time to exercise their murderous propensities to the full, the Red Régime had collapsed in Transbaikalia.

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When we arose one morning there stood on a siding a long, very long, saloon-carriage, painted white. "Another delegate?" I asked.

Dr. Berger looked out and gave a start. "My God!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter, Lieutenant? What is it?"

"That is a plague-carriage," he gasped out.

"What? Why? What for?" six or seven voices called out.

"They are only to be seen when the plague is round about."

Saltin, who had experienced an outbreak of plague, told us all about it. A couple of such saloon-carriages were held ready in every large town, and the instant an outbreak of plague was reported from a village, one was attached to the next train travelling in that direction. The carriages were stocked with disinfectants, contained a tiny hospital with a dozen beds — and in each were two nurses and a doctor. The suspected cases were put into the hospital and so isolated, while their dwellings, together with everything they contained, were set on fire. Not a single object was permitted to survive the flames.

For four days we lived in a state of extreme anxiety. Each night another house went up in flames. "Damnation! That's quick work!" said Windt.

"I hope . . ." added Olfert.

On the fifth day the carriage had vanished. The whole camp breathed again. "If it had come into our barracks or the men's," said Dr. Berger, "everything would have been at an end."

For a few more days we continued to live in a state of gloomy foreboding. Might not one of the countless rats have brought the germs into the barracks? We were in luck. Not a single case was reported throughout the whole camp.

We began to receive books, newspapers, instruments. Slowly a tiny camp library grew up. Gradually, quite gradually, we

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came to realize that they had been doing much for us at home; but for the majority of us it was already too late. Bit by bit we got what we needed, although some — indeed, the most — of it was of no use any more. If we had only got these things three years sooner . . . We had become too listless and worn out to be able to execute even the slightest tasks, and our spirits had become so dejected that no seed of any kind could find nourishment on so parched a soil.

Seydlitz left today. To join Semjonoff's staff in Tschita. He left secretly without anyone being aware of his departure. " Ordered to report in another camp," was the official announcement. Vereniki welcomed him with open arms. He preferred his cool and resolute character to my softer nature. " You are a fool not to go with him! " he said again and again. " You'll repent it later! He will make a great career for himself, this young Seydlitz! " When he said good-bye to me, he pressed my hand until it hurt. " We'll never see each other again," he said calmly, " but don't let us forget each other! "

The first day without him seemed oddly empty. Although we had never spoken a great deal with each other and had not understood each other very well, yet the daily sight of his disciplined and quiet demeanour had often endowed me with moral courage. In the end we were even more cut off from the others than we were from each other. With them we merely lived through the miserable daily round, the everlasting, torturing monotony, which did not form any bond of union and only resulted in making men hate the sight of each other. Seydlitz, on the other hand, belonged to the days of Nizhni Novgorod and the long months in the railway wagons — and to Totzkoje!

" Hello! " said Olfert; " you are feeling a bit lonely, aren't you? "

" Yes, Olfert," I answered frankly.

He put his arm round my shoulders and leaned lightly

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against me. "Then you'll take me as a substitute, won't you?" he said in a strange voice.

"Very gladly, Olfert," I said.

The other day I noticed the soldiers in the men's barracks hunting dogs. They lured all the dogs that were running about to come to them, strangled them with bits of string, and then cut their throats. . . .

"For cutlets!" said Windt calmly.

I was furious. Then I thought: Has one the right to condemn them? Had I not seen myself that only a short time ago they had dearly loved these dogs and done everything for them? Unceasing famine had destroyed those gentler feelings. Something more had been brought to an end. . . . I decided to tell Pod to keep a careful watch upon Suschka.

Captain Kosim, who was always quarrelsome, attacked a sentry in a fit of rage. Before anyone could prevent him the Cossack had drawn his sabre. Kosim lay in hospital in a dying condition. The doctors disagreed as to the cause of his break-down. Some called it delirium tremens, but, whatever it was, it was the twelfth case this year.

A short time ago a young Lieutenant made his appearance in the barrack-yard stark naked and annoyed the passers-by in the most incredible manner. He could only be brought back to barracks by the employment of force. He was ordered to be sent to the asylum in Omsk in a few days' time, and Captain Kosim was to follow as soon as he could be transported. The asylum was said to be filled for the most part with prisoners of war. Frequently one encountered men in the barrack-yard who suddenly performed some mad action. After the news of the German collapse had become known, an Ensign was to be seen running about for days accusing all the superior officers of saluting incorrectly. "Put your heels together, sir!" he

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roared out every minute. "Salute me! I am the unknown soldier. . . ." Little by little things grew worse and worse. Gradually one came to fear for one's best friends.

"Ensign," said Olfert, "a Bavarian dragoon spoke to me at the fence. He's been walking up and down for hours waiting to see someone from our room. He asked me to tell you to come as quickly as possible to the barracks. Your old comrade is ill — has been ill for a week."

"Pod," I thought in terror. "Are you calling for me — Pod?" I slipped on my overcoat, head-protector, and felt boots. "If he asks for me, my God! . . . If he asks for me!" I kept thinking. As I entered the room, I saw that his eyes were fixed upon the passage along which I must come. But his eyes were no longer the good old St. Bernard eyes. He was no longer my Pod — my old brown bear.

"He's looked like that since yesterday," whispered the artist. "Keeps on looking over there unblinkingly."

I sat down beside him. "Pod . . ." I said softly. He did not stir, and only his eyelids flickered slightly.

"At times he is unconscious," murmured the artist. "Notwithstanding his open eyes."

"Why didn't you send for me sooner?" I asked irritably.

"He wouldn't permit it. He threatened to kill anyone who did so. He said he would be all right in three days. . . ."

"Why isn't he in hospital?"

"Full up!" said the artist. "Spotted typhus has broken out again, and only those suffering from it are admitted."

"What does the doctor say? What's the matter with him?"

"Consumption was all he said."

A volunteer stepped forward. "There was nothing wrong with him organically, Ensign," he said politely. "The cause of the trouble, according to the doctor, lay far more in his mental condition."

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I started up. "And I knew nothing about it?" was the thought that arose within me. Knew nothing, felt nothing, suspected nothing? . . . I turned round. Brünn was cowering behind me. "My God! What is the matter with him, Hatschek?" I cried out in horrified astonishment. He looked like a corpse — pale, hollow, a breathing ruin of a man.

Hatschek touched his forehead with his forefinger. "For the last four days, ever since Pod has been lying ill . . . Day and night he cries continually the same old thing. . . . But they won't take him away. They simply say he will soon be sent to Omsk, and that we can stand him better than the sick; at least so the doctor said."

Brünn looked at me like a stupid, dirty beast. "I must have a woman again, *Junker!* Young, supple . . ." he stammered out amid giggles. I suddenly shivered. "Where is little Blank?" I asked quickly in an effort to think of other things.

"Dead. Yesterday evening. Consumption," said the Tadpole. "He suffered terribly. At the last he always talked about a shop. He was full of blood when he died."

"And they have eaten our Suschka as well," said the Schwalangscher.

After a time Pod stirred. I quickly bent over him. "Pod, old man, dear old boy — do you know me?"

"Yes, boy . . ." he breathed. What was the matter with his voice? Where had the old deep, rumbling tone disappeared to? I seized my coat. "I've brought you something to eat, Pod! Good things —"

"I want — nothing more. . . ." The four words struck me like four blows. Instantly I knew that all was up with him. "Hunger — *golod;* bread — *ehljeb;* eggs — *jeiza!*" the words rang in my head.

"But you must eat, old boy!" I said loudly.

"I'm not — hungry — any longer. . . ."

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A cold shiver passed through my body. I shook myself in an attempt to get rid of it. "Pod," I said swiftly, "you must not throw up the sponge. I'll talk to the doctor. You must be brought to hospital. Then you'll get better again. And spring is coming—"

"I want to stay with my comrades," he said in a tired voice. "With the artist and the Bavarians and . . . Brünn. They need me. . . ."

I took his hand in mine—a hard, thick-skinned peasant hand. Tears came into my eyes. If I had bent my head, they would have poured forth in a burning stream. I needed all my strength to enable me to hold my head erect. "I'll come every day now, Pod," I said cheerily.

"It was good of you to come at all," he murmured.

"At all? What do you mean, Pod? I'll come very often," I said excitedly, almost laughingly. "Ah! we'll put you on your legs again. And in the spring we go home! And then you'll plough again, Pod. With the brown one, Pod, about whom you told me, and with Blesse, who is so like the Holsteinerin! You'll give her a good wallop if she tries to hang back in the traces! But perhaps she's forgotten that trick by now—what do you think, Pod? Yes, and then you'll sing her praises, leaning against your plough, so that it crunches . . ." He only smiled. Oh! that knowing smile—it smothered up my words like a black shroud.

"You must will it, Pod!" I said helplessly.

"Look up Anna," was all he said. "She must see you. . . . I have written to her about you, often. . . . Tell her about me. . . . In the evening, on the seat before the door, from where one sees—all—my—fields . . ."

I heard nothing more. For a long time he went on whispering, but I could not understand a word. If Brünn had not continued to scream incessantly: "I want to have a woman again, a

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young, supple . . ." I might have caught something of what he was whispering. I remained seated beside his bed between the Schwalangscher and the artist until dawn came. As the sun rose, he ceased to breathe. Up to the last we heard him murmuring and whispering. "It sounded like 'Anna'?" queried the artist in amazement. "Was that his wife's name?"

I realized that he had told nobody, only me — and now there was no longer any need for anyone else to know. I shrugged my shoulders, removed all his papers and letters from his tunic, and took down Holsteinerin, the champion mare, from the wall. In the pocket of his trousers I found an old, chewed-up pencil on which the letter "A" had been carved. I took that also.

As I left the barracks, an icy east wind blew in my face. Nowhere was anyone to be seen. I leaned up against the wall of the barracks and suddenly became conscious that I was crying like a child. A fit of shivering came over me, striking into my very heart, but it did not come from the ice-cold wind which froze the tears as they ran down my cheeks. It came from within — despite the company of many thousands of men I was shivering from loneliness. "Pod!" I called out helplessly. "Pod, my friend . . ."

Pod's death laid me in bed. What hunger and heat, cold and illness, had not been able to accomplish throughout the space of three years, it accomplished overnight. I lay for fourteen days, although the doctor declared that I was organically sound — "Just like Pod!" I thought to myself. For hours at a time Dr. Berger sat by my bedside in order to help me pass the time. Olfert looked after me with an assiduity that became almost embarrassing. When lain upon for any length of time my sacks of shavings became hard, yet what would it have been like if I had had to lie upon bare boards — as Pod and Blank had had to do! These Cossack corn-sacks undoubtedly

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had their good points as well; for, above all, they reeked of horses and of resin and of forests. Every time I smelt this odour my thoughts unwillingly flew homewards. What would it be like to stand, after all these years in this desolate steppe, for the first time again in a wood? I thought that I should probably embrace the very trees and kiss their bark. I should like to live in a wood on my return home; seeing nothing, hearing nothing, only breathing and dreaming and gazing upon the trees. . . . But I should never be able to do that — who would and should who has passed twenty? And in a conquered land? At this stage I always found that my thoughts became involved — my brooding lost in darkness. What should I do on my return home? I should certainly have to adopt a profession. But what? What?

For many of us — indeed, for the majority — this life here was no more than an episode. On their return home it would be laid away in a drawer in their cupboard, and the lock well turned upon it. They would go back to their old life and take it up just where they had left off — and forget! But we — we youths? Seydlitz once said: "I grew to manhood in war. I cannot unlearn what I have learnt!" Great Moloch had swallowed him up — living. What was I to do to prevent his seizing upon me, alive or dead?

It had lasted too long and had been too much for our years — that was it. It could have been a great and valuable experience for us: its duration and overwhelmingness had turned it into a destroying martyrdom. My God! I could not do as Seydlitz had done — nor could the great majority of us. What were we to do? We who could not change our inner misery into a strengthening virtue? I let all professions pass in review before my eyes. If one only had had one already! We boys would have to begin to learn all over again. . . . And how can a man begin again to learn who has passed the best years of his life lying on a bed doing nothing, scarcely ever holding a pen,

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scarcely ever taking a book in his hand? Ah well! they'd understand that, they'd give us privileges. But then . . . ? Should I become a lawyer? Like Dr. Berger? "In accordance with paragraph so-and-so you are charged with a breach of the peace inasmuch as you made a libellous remark to the appellant . . ." Would that not be irony? Could one of us still grasp such an idea, after all we had lived through? Should I not suddenly burst out laughing like a madman? In a loud chorus of laughter in company with all those from Totzkoje?

The best thing would be to enter a monastery. In a green, quiet forest among silent, pious monks.

I started up. Olfert had entered the room. He looked round quickly. Nobody was in the room. "Alone at last . . ." he said with a forced laugh, coming towards my corner and seating himself upon my bed. I looked up at him in astonishment. He turned his head and looked strangely at me. "What's the matter with you, Olfert?" I asked in some anxiety.

He took my hand, laid it upon his knee, and stroked it diffidently. "I'll tell you," he began. "But perhaps you know already, perhaps you have already suspected it? I am . . . No, naturally it is not love — that would be absurd. . . . But something like it. . . ." He sighed deeply. "Why didn't you let me go to the women?" he burst out. "Then perhaps it would never have happened. . . ."

"What would not have happened, Olfert?" I asked helplessly.

"Haven't you noticed it? . . . I cannot stand it any longer! I cannot sleep, I am mad, certainly, but I cannot help it . . . unless . . ."

I went hot and cold. Everything within me rose in defiance. Nevertheless . . . It was not the same as with Thurn. In the name of God! How had it come about? Had I also got to the same stage? "I shall not be able to defend myself if he . . ."

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I thought to myself, partly in anxiety, partly with a new, hitherto unknown, and exciting sense of anticipation. . . .

"Edwin!" Olfert called out. For years I have not heard my Christian name, which is not very common among soldiers, and on the last occasion had not a girl used it? This thought failed to be of assistance. I was utterly powerless. I saw his large eyes gleaming; they were wet and dark and the eyelids were very slightly reddened. . . .

A trembling sense of expectation took hold of me. "What will it be like?" I thought with curiosity. Never before was a man so near me. . . . "Perhaps I shall forget everything if he does it," I thought. Perhaps they all forget about it, when they do it? Perhaps it affects one like morphia? Ah! it would have been a good thing to have had some morphia just then! All of us in Siberia would have been drug-fiends, if we had been able to obtain any. . . . "And," I thought, "and . . . supposing I close my eyes and think of a girl . . . a peasant girl . . . a strong, solid, broad-shouldered . . . ? Perhaps then I could — bear it?" I also remembered how good he had been to me — this fellow Olfert; that he had guarded me like a dog; that it was possible that he suffered inhumanly; that it was only his begging eyes that had taken the resistance out of me. . . .

I lay for a moment paralysed before something unexpected occurred: I suddenly became conscious of something strange, unpleasant, upon my face, a slight prickling or scratching. . . . "He is badly shaved!" was the thought that at once flew to my head. At the same instant the broad country girl whom I had sought to call to mind at the moment of his kiss disappeared, vanished. . . . "No! No! No!" I threw myself about, struck at his chest, turned and twisted to all sides, and pressed my thumbs into his eyes. "Let me go! I won't . . . cannot . . ." I groaned. At the same instant steps echoed down the corridor. Olfert sprang up, walked rapidly across to the

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window, and stood gazing into the barrack-yard with his back turned towards the door.

"Boys!" said Windt, coming into the room, "have you heard? In the men's barracks someone has castrated himself — a fellow called Brünninghaus!"

The next day I got up. I should have stayed longer in bed, but I wanted to avoid another similar occurrence. When I was up and about, I could defend myself better; for Olfert seized every opportunity when we were alone in the room to overcome my resistance. He almost whined. "No!" I yelled at him. Once I was forced to strike him in order to defend myself. How would it end? I felt incapable of putting up a defence for much longer. . . . On the sixth evening I went to Lieutenant Schulenburg. I saw no other way of escape. In such things Dr. Berger was as helpless as I was, but this small, quiet man with the smooth, typical officer's head and the firm, projecting chin . . .

"Lieutenant," I said nervously, "may I ask you to be so kind as to go for an hour's walk with me now and then?"

He looked at me until I grew red in the face.

"Lieutenant," I continued haltingly, "even if you do not like me, or for any other reason, nevertheless please do it for an hour a day."

"Certainly, Ensign! But why?"

"Please do not ask me to give my reasons," I said in a low voice. He bent his head slightly. "All right, Ensign, I understand. An hour every day, and tomorrow at ten o'clock."

The young doctor, who had attended me when I was sick told me that during the first years in Russia their complaints regarding want of cleanliness, instruments, and bandages were invariably replied to with arrest and confinement in the *katorga*. He had often had to operate with his pen-knife. When

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later on he was permitted the use of instruments, he was only allowed to operate with four guards with fixed bayonets standing beside the operating-table.

"Have you any idea," I asked, "how many prisoners of war have died up to the present in Siberia?"

"Yes," he answered. "The last time I met Elsa Brändström I asked her, and she told me five hundred thousand up to the present. . . ."

Spring had come. I spent the spring days in Schulenburg's company; for our daily hour had imperceptibly increased to two and three. Peace had also come to me. When Olfert saw that I sought refuge from him in Schulenburg's company, he left me alone; it was undoubtedly true that he felt I would reveal everything to Schulenburg in the last resort — and it is even possible that he believed I had already done so. Moreover, he began to seek the company of the Warrior. Was it so long since he himself had hurled words of abuse at such "couples"?

Schulenburg and I seldom spoke to one another. We walked silently, determinedly, and at a measured pace. At times it seemed to me as if I were being filled with a healing strength in the society of this quiet and strong man. Only once did he break forth into speech, when I grumbled and declared that I did not know what I should do in the future.

"Rot!" he said curtly. "That's pure slackness! *Probantur tempestate fortes!* as the Romans said."

"And what will you do, Lieutenant?" I asked.

"Oh," he said confidently, "something! Perhaps I'll become a merchant, perhaps a farmer — I'll certainly find something to do! I am not going to allow myself to be beaten. I'm done with the past. Moreover, a time has come again when honest men will be wanted more than ever. I'm not going to

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belong to the everlasting yesterday. We've been destroying for long enough. It's time we began to start building again!"

His words made a deep impression on me. That was the true path! I thought. And my more particular path would be to be a — peasant. Like old Pod. . . . I suddenly felt that unwittingly I had found the right man at the moment when I most needed him — in the days that followed upon Olfert's break-down and Pod's death. I rejoiced to think that my instinct still remained sound. . . .

From one point of view it was not a bad thing that our food got worse from day to day: one slept better undernourished. Then there is no superfluity of vitality to go to the brain and to poison the blood. Formerly I had thought that the principal care of a prisoner must be to guard against bodily weakness; but now I know that spiritual degeneracy can be not only more dangerous but much more difficult to fight against. What was left to us? Fantasy . . . that became for us as a green wood, a city of refuge, a sanctuary. But a wood that was populated with maidens. We talked and we dreamed; and invariably our dreams and our conversation became centred in the thing for which we were all hungering: woman. Our fantasies became more and more inflamed, relief was no longer to be naturally obtained, nor did it suffice to quench the fire that burned ever more hotly. Our brains played ever more and more madly with fancies about that very thing from which we must abstain at all costs to ourselves. Some told of dreams of murders committed out of sheer lust, others of disgusting abnormalities. If the first woman we possessed, after this long period of abstinence, were not clever enough lovingly to heal us and cool our passions, then we were likely to remain abnormal for the rest of our lives and to spread abroad a plague of perversion over our old Fatherland.

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I walked up to the Home-hill. For a short time past nobody had gone up there, for a young Captain had there cut his throat with a razor. When he was discovered, he lay upon his stomach with his face turned westwards as though he would gaze towards home until his last breath left him. Since that event the hill had been deserted, but nevertheless I went up to the top. The funerals had once more begun, but this spring we were forbidden to accompany them. Only from the summit of this hill could one follow their path towards the cemetery — why was I there? On the spot where the Captain had lain, I strewed sand over the dried blood so that it could no longer be seen.

Once again the narrow path leading to the cemetery gleamed yellow with sawdust and shavings. How many long caravans passed daily up and down that path! I watched one with an intentness so great that it seemed as though I would pierce through the very coffins. Such a procession had brought my comrades to their last resting-place: Schnarrenberg, my sergeant major; the childlike grocer, Blank; the simple peasant, Pod. I had thought of waiting beside the morgue until their bodies were brought out; then I remembered that I should have to examine perhaps two thousand naked corpses, searchingly, minutely, before I recognized the loved faces. And that would have exceeded my powers of endurance.

As I thought of these things, I became filled once more with a new sense of loneliness and hopelessness. I threw myself upon the ground, spotted with the blood of a man in despair, and in a desperation akin to his I bit into the sand in my agony. In front of my very eyes my comrades were being borne one after the other — two or three thousand of them — to the cemetery; and one of them had been as dear to me as a brother — Dragoon Podbielski. "I am the last!" I groaned. What was I to do? I could never again be a quiet, happy normal man. What had become of the Totzkoje squad? I'd

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never be able to forget, always be forced to remember that masturbation had reduced that jolly fellow Brünn to an idiot; that consumption had eaten up the girlish Blank; that our defeat in the war had broken down the resistance of the determined Schnarrenberg; that the war had swallowed up alive the proud Seydlitz; that sexual desire had ruined the willpower of Olfert; that home-sickness had carried away the strong body of Pod. . . . What would be the use of my returning home? Would it not be better if I followed them? Here — on this hill where someone had already paved the way for me? Would it not be wiser to surrender a life in which it was possible to suffer what we had suffered? Perhaps it would go on for another two years? And even if it did not — what could I do at home? Had not the war made a Siberia of the whole world for me? For us was it not everywhere Siberia? Because we could never hope to forget? I threw myself about and beat upon my temples. "And shall I live as if nothing had happened?" I shrieked into the ground.

After everything that had happened?
Sleep and wake?
Eat and drink?
After everything that had happened?
Perhaps marry?
Bring up *children?* . . .

Once more I was plunged into the depths of despondency, until a tiny incident occurred to pull my feet out of the slough and set them on firm ground again. It was almost nothing — and it was so tremendous as to baffle description. I was standing at the window and saw Lieutenant Schulenburg — that small, rodlike regular officer — walking past. Erect, austere, silent, he went his way — honourable, independent, far-seeing. "What would he do if he had your knowledge of languages?" I said to myself in reproach. Escape — the word flew through my

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head. In the same instant I suddenly took a resolve, and with it all slackness vanished. I would escape. I would once more take up life again — wash away from me in facing peril all that had adhered to me here, and drown remembrance in the flowing stream of life.

I was too young to overcome Siberia as Schulenburg could overcome it; I suffered more than he did. I could only overcome it if I threw myself, like a mortally diseased person, into some health-giving stream. That alone could remove the stains from my spirit and give me new strength! If I had luck, I should emerge to shake the drops from my head — and to find myself whole again.

Did not our Fair Angel say on the occasion of her last visit: "My friends, I know of a warfare crueller and harder than any other — prison life! Nevertheless, the victory can be won. And in the end you will attain to a maturity and stature that cannot be achieved by those who experience only the daily round of everyday life!" She was right! That was to be the recompense for all these years — that was the harvest they would yield. But I could not wait until all should return home together. In my condition I could not hold out. *Va banque* — that was the only game for me. I resolved to undergo a drastic cure — one of those cures that either kill or cure. And if I died? I must, in any case, have died slowly without the cure.

As I went away, filled with new hopes, and meditating a thousand plans, that good fellow Saltin called me over to him. He was standing in front of the morgue and pointing to a tiny green plant that had quietly and determinedly thrust its way up through the barren soil.

"It's the only one in Siberia!" he said, laughingly. "For eight days I have watched it growing. Four days ago it spread out its first leaves, and today the first flowers have appeared."

"Truly, the worst rubbish-heap can bear fruit!" I said with conviction.

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I stood at the window and gazed out. Everyone was asleep; only Dr. Berger was still reading. The Warrior sighed in his sleep, and Seydlitz's place was empty. The desert before my eyes stretched out coldly — white, like a moonlit landscape. "It won't be long now!" I thought. "Where there is a will, there is a way."

I'd find a second smuggler. One night I would break out at the same place where we had crept out before, but this time I would go west and not east. And this time I would be successful. . . . Two Mongolian horses would be waiting behind the hill. The smuggler would be there with a Russian uniform for me. With a low cry I would hurl myself into the saddle. The new grass would silence the beating of the horses' hoofs; blowing through their nostrils, the horses would trot away, and their heads would be turned towards the west. . . .

As dawn broke, we made a brief halt. I threw myself upon the steppe and held my head in my hands. Nothing more was to be seen of our camp, with its red barracks and barbed-wire fence. Alone the cemetery on the hill stood up in the distance to take farewell of me. It seemed as if all the crosses nodded approvingly to me — as if all the dead gazed after me.

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GLOSSARY OF RUSSIAN WORDS

Ataman	The elective ruler of the Cossacks
Borzoi	Russian dog
Charascho	All right
Copeck	A piece of money
Do swidanje	*Au revoir*
Gospodin	Mr.
Idji	Off!
Ja was ujublju	I love you.
Katorga	Criminal prison
Krepost	Fortress
Kvass	A Russian drink
Lafka	A small grocer
Litewka	Army tunic
Muschko	A peasant
Nagaika	A Cossack leather whip
Nitschewo	It doesn't matter.
Nie ponimaj	I don't understand.
Nu	Now
Papirossi	Cigarettes
Pascholl	Be off!
Pogrom	A massacre (usually of Jews)
Po tschetiri	Form fours!
Praportschik	An ensign
Propusk	A permit
Pyroshnis	A sort of pastry
Rubaschka	A Russian dog
Rubaschka	A Russian shirt
Schtschi	A Russian soup
Sitschas	Immediately
Skat	A card game
Spassivo	Thanks
Starschi	Sergeant major
Troika	A vehicle drawn by three horses abreast
Tscheinik	A tea-pot
Zemskaja Uprawa	Agricultural authorities

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A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is composed on the Linotype in Bodoni, so-called after its designer, Giambattista Bodoni (1740–1813) a celebrated Italian scholar and printer. Bodoni planned his type especially for use on the more smoothly finished papers that came into vogue late in the eighteenth century and drew his letters with a mechanical regularity that is readily apparent on comparison with the less formal old style. Other characteristics that will be noted are the square serifs without fillet and the marked contrast between the light and heavy strokes.

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